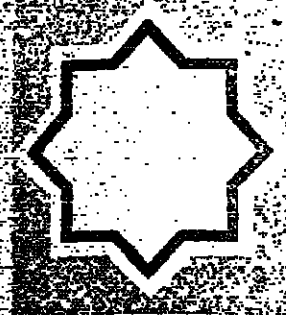


The Star



Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly



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Le Jourdain
Supplément en français du Star



Police arrests Syrian man behind triple murder

AMMAN (Star)—In less than 24 hours, police arrested a Syrian man who admitted to having carried out the horrific triple murder of a Syrian family earlier this week.

According to Public Security statement on Wednesday, police arrested 35-year-old Faleh Raja' El Din Jilasi, a Syrian national living in Um Uttheina in Amman, who admitted to killing Jamal Abdouh Majdoub, 39, and his wife Manal, 35, whose badly stabbed bodies were discovered by Civil Defence fire fighters in their apartment near the University of Jordan on Tuesday. Police said Jilasi also admitted to kidnapping and killing the couple's two-and-half-year-old son.

According to the police statement, the confessed murderer admitted to visiting the victims' apartment on the night of the murder where he later slaughtered the husband with a kitchen knife and then stabbed his sleeping wife to death before setting fire to the apartment. He also admitted to kidnapping the sleeping child and later strangling him to death. Jilasi told investigators that he buried the child in a Madam farm belonging to his father in law.

He told police that he had carried out the murders as a revenge against the victim's father, with whom he had financial dealings. He said that two years ago he had commercial dealings with the victim's father and that the father owed him seven million Syrian liras (about

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US Senate backs House bill to move US embassy to Jerusalem

WASHINGTON—The US Senate overwhelmingly approved legislation Tuesday night to overhaul the US government's foreign-policy agencies and pay most of United States debt to the United Nations. But the Senate's bill and an earlier House bill call for moving the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, an issue which observers see running counter to administration policy, leaving its fate open to question.

Now the measure heads for a conference with the House, which earlier approved a bill with a similar proposal to merge the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the United States Information Agency into the State Department.

The House version contains no UN payment plan, however. The Senate version authorizes payment of \$819 million over three years to meet past-due obligations to the United Nations, mostly for peacekeeping assessments, on condition that the world body carries out structural reforms, cuts its budget and reduces the share of its budget charged to the United States.

The UN issue will have to be

resolved in the conference. In broad outline, the Senate version gives the Clinton administration much of what it wants on the executive branch reorganization, funding for diplomatic activities and the United Nations. "There are certainly many attractive things about the legislation the administration supports," White House press secretary Mike McCurry said. "I want to stop well short of giving a blanket endorsement of this bill, because there are certain things that we're going to have to work with Congress on."

Perhaps the most contentious, officials said, are provisions in both bills that would move the United States much closer to formal recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital despite vehement Arab objections. The provisions reflect overwhelming support in Congress for Israel, but in the administration's view constitute unwarranted interference with Middle East peace negotiations.

"Our view is that Jerusalem is the most emotional and complex issue that Israel and the Palestinians will have to deal with in the permanent status negotiations," State Department spokesman Nicholas



An old man being carried away after being hit in the head by a rubber bullet in Hebron. Following the Congress vote to move the US embassy to Jerusalem, demonstrations erupted in cities throughout the Occupied Territories

Burns said. "We do not believe it is wise for the United States or any other outside country to make an initiative on Jerusalem that in effect prejudices that issue."

Some outbreaks of violence among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip in recent days have been attributed to anger over what are perceived as pro-Israel votes here on the Jerusalem issue.

During House debate on the

bill, Rep. Lee Hamilton, D-Ind., senior Democrat on the International Relations committee, called the Jerusalem language "unacceptable to the administration." But Biden said that "if the president vetoes over this, I'll eat this microphone," and in fact administration officials were not threatening a veto Tuesday.

Congress and the State Department have been arguing about Jerusalem almost since Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East war, annexed it and declared the city its indivisible capital. The State Department regards Jerusalem as "disputed territory," with its permanent status to be settled in negotiations, and has kept the US embassy in Tel Aviv.

The State Department also has maintained an independent consulate in what was Arab East Jerusalem. That diplomatic mission is not accredited to any country, but has long served as a de facto US embassy to the Palestinians.

Three years ago Congress ordered the embassy moved to Jerusalem by 1999, but it allowed the president to waive the provision in the national interest.

Now Congress has voted to require that the East Jerusalem consulate be made subordinate to the embassy in Tel Aviv, rather than independent. It has also voted to provide \$100 million to finance construction of an embassy in Jerusalem.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's visit to the United States is being hailed as a great success following meetings with US President Clinton, Vice-President Al Gore and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright. The highlight of the visit was the announcement by the US of a \$100 million aid package to Jordan through the creation of a Middle East Peace and Stability Fund. The aid package, which will be made available next month, is divided into two halves: \$50 million is expected to go to budget support and the rest to supporting specific projects.



Netanyahu's zigzag policy thwarts peacemaking

By Marjorie Miller
OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—During Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's first year in office, US-Israeli relations have cooled, the Palestinian peace negotiations have stalled and contacts with the Syrians have ceased. The talk of peace that prevailed under previous Labor Party governments is punctuated now by open discussion of the possibility of another Arab-Israeli war.

But what much of the world views as a dangerous state of affairs is, to Netanyahu and his right-wing supporters, a good record.

"Anyone who thought that the stopping of the mad dash to the 1967 boundaries would pass without some kind of friction was naive," Netanyahu said in an interview, summarizing his first year. "Overall, we have achieved the main targets that we set out to achieve on the fronts of peace, security and prosperity."

Netanyahu took office as Israel's first directly elected prime minister a year ago promising to slow Israeli-Arab peacemaking in order to give the country "peace with security." He vowed to strengthen Jewish settlements in the West Bank, to reinforce Israel's sole claim on Jerusalem and to stand fast against establishment of a Palestinian state or return of the Golan Heights to Syria—key Arab demands for peace.

He since has continued to zigzag between fulfillment of the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian accord, based on trading land for peace, and attempts to dig farther into territory Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast War. In September, he opened a new door to a tourist tunnel in Jerusalem's disputed Old City, a move that sparked Palestinian riots and armed clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian police in which at least 75 Palestinians and Israelis died.

Then, in January, he signed a US-brokered agreement to hand over 80 percent of the West Bank city of Hebron to Palestinian control, earning



international accolades and anger from some members of his hard-line coalition.

Netanyahu lifted a freeze on Jewish settlement construction that was declared, if not implemented, by the previous Labor government. In March, he ordered Israeli bulldozers to start work on a 6,500-unit Jewish development in traditionally Arab East Jerusalem. That resulted in a suicide bombing at a Tel Aviv cafe, the suspension of negotiations and a halt to Palestinian security cooperation.

Now he proposes to accelerate final negotiations with the Palestinians on crucial issues dividing them. But he has offered an opening position so narrow the Palestinians have dismissed it.

This pingpong policy has supporters applauding Netanyahu for fulfilling his promises.

Opponents accuse him of destroying the peace process while blaming its demise on the Arabs. Skeptics, meanwhile, say that a year into his term, it is still impossible to decipher the intentions of their leader.

"There is a third possibility, which is that he doesn't know what he wants and is incapable of formulating a coherent strategy," said Joseph Alpher, director of the Israel-Middle East office of the American Jewish Committee in Jerusalem.

Netanyahu was elected in May 1996 with a slim majority. His popularity rating has dropped sharply to about 35 percent, reported Hanoch Smith of the Smith Research Institute in Jerusalem, one of the country's leading pollsters. That decline in support comes from both rightist and centrist voters.

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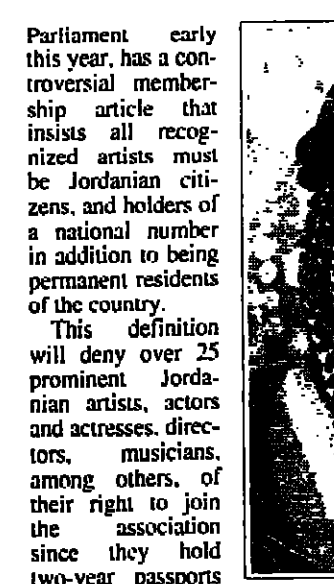
Actors say new artists law may drop curtain on their careers

By Raed Al Abed
Star Staff Writer
MAHMOUD ABU Ghareeb, 74, is known in the Arab world as the father figure of Jordanian actors. With over 51 years of acting experience behind him, Abu Ghareeb appeared for the first time on stage in 1946 in Palestine. He became a familiar face for many Jordanians and Arabs through numerous TV drama series which he made for Jordan and Arab television stations.

He was a key player in establishing the Jordanian Artists Federation in 1977.

Since Abu Ghareeb has reached the retirement age, he was hoping that the new Jordan Actors Association Law will reward him for his services to Jordan's drama movement in the past years, by offering him a suitable pension. But, his hopes have been dashed.

Suddenly, Abu Ghareeb finds himself outside the legal framework of the Jordanian artists movement, of which he has been a part for over 30 years. The new law, which joined together the artists and the musicians federations into one body and was ratified by the



Abu Ghareeb

Parliament early this year, has a controversial membership article that insists all recognized artists must be Jordanian citizens, and holders of a national number in addition to being permanent residents of the country.

This definition will deny over 25 prominent Jordanian artists, actors and actresses, directors, musicians, among others, their right to join the association since they hold two-year passports (given to those who from Gaza Strip or the West Bank) or who hold the five year passports but have no national number (given to West Bankers with yellow identity cards) or who are from other Arab nationalities but have been residing in Jordan for many years. It will also deny Jordanian artists who are living outside Jordan from the membership right.

The same artists were members of the federation under the old law, which required members to have a Jordanian passport, but not necessarily to be citizens, or Arab nationals who are residents in Jordan.

Abu Ghareeb, a Gazan who holds a two-year Jordanian

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Legal little guys relish taking on a big Mac attack

By William D. Montalbano
LONDON—A judge's verdict deciding the longest trial in British history should come this week, but victory is already at hand for two British activists locked in a bizarre David and Goliath battle with McDonald's.

Across 313 trial days, London environmentalists Helen Steel and David Morris—with combined starting legal knowledge of zero—acted as their own defense counsel to fight off a Big Mac attack mounted by some of the slickest lawyers in the realm.

Originally expected to last a few weeks, the libel case pitted the activists' assertion of the right to free speech against a corporation's right to protect itself from libelous accusation.

It has been called the biggest food fight in British history and a multimillion-dollar public relations disaster for the \$30-billion-a-year company.

Whatever the verdict now, classic underdogs Morris, an unemployed postman, and Steel, a part-time bartender, have already won the popularity stakes.

Their ants vs. elephant struggle has generated:

- A two-night, three-hour British television reconstruction, "McLibel!"
- A book, "McLibel: Burger Culture on Trial"
- And international sympathy now that includes a World Wide Web site with 19,000 pages of court transcripts already browsed by 9 million visitors (<http://www.mcspotlight.org/>).

Meantime, more than 2 million anti-McDonald's leaflets have been distributed in Britain and many more abroad since the legal battle was joined, say Morris and Steel.

McDonald's says it took the activists to court as a last resort and as a matter of principle: false accusations against its good name and business practices cannot go unanswered.

The McLibel case began in 1990 when the fast food giant filed libel charges against Steel and Morris for distributing a leaflet titled "What's Wrong With McDonald's."

The activists, known by admirers as the McLibel Two, handed out the leaflet as members of London Greenpeace, the independent, environmental group that produced it. The organization has no connection with Greenpeace Ltd. of international renown.

The leaflet asserted that McDonald's destroys rain forests, flouts environmental

concerns with its packaging, sells dangerously unhealthy food, seduces children into unhealthy eating habits, exploits staff, particularly blacks and women, and is responsible for torturing animals.

McDonald's rejects all of the claims in the leaflet, which it says has been distributed in Britain and around the world since 1986. "If McDonald's did not take action to correct these lies, it would be assumed to be true and come to form part of public perception about McDonald's," said company communications director Mike Love in London.

Evidence at the trial from independent experts and employees demonstrated that, one by one, the allegations are untrue and libelous, McDonald's says. The company says it is environmentally responsible, sells food that is a valuable source of energy, advertises responsibly, demands that its

suppliers respect animal welfare and offers its workers competitive pay and working conditions.

"The action was not about individuals, it was about establishing the truth," said Love. "Neither was it about freedom of speech. It was about the right to stop people distributing damaging libels."

From their scruffy north London defense office above a carpet shop, Steel and Morris, unrepentant and assertive, argue that McDonald's is not a special case but symptomatic of a destructive corporate culture.

"McDonald's is just one example—we feel that it is like the other big corporations which damage the environment and exploit workers," said Steel, now 31, a one-time gardener who says she takes home around \$100 a week tending bar.

"McDonald's sells junk food.

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World Report

Tawjihi exams, from nightmares to riots

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

IT'S TAWJIHI time. Last week the Tawjihi exams was on everyone's lips and no doubt it will be the talk of town for the next few weeks. From the word go, this year's exams have been beset by a series of unfortunate incidents that involved storming the classrooms, cheating and dismissals.

About 72,000 pupils are taking part in the exams that started on 9 June. During the first week students have been expressing unusual weariness.

The first day which was for the Arabic Language exam passed quietly. However,

some students did complain that the questions were unclear.

One student allegedly claimed "the questions were not taken from the textbooks that we have studied."

A group of other students in the scientific stream complained for example that the time for the "National Orientation" subject was too short. But this was rejected by one teacher.

"These are just excuses by students, it shows that they didn't really study hard enough," she added.

Another teacher from the Amman area said the timing of any exam is chosen after careful consideration by a well-organized exam committee.

Observations made by students are not of course taken seriously by teachers. It is pointed out that students have a habit of whining. But this year it seems, the course has already been set, and indeed, it goes beyond peevish complaints.

Something very grave happened on 12 June and continues to reverberate in the educational community. At the start of the English Language exam, youths stormed into three examination halls in the Yarmouk, Adib Wahba and the Salt Secondary Schools at the Balqa Governorate.

They were reported to have snatched the examina-

tion answers from the teachers supervising the examinations and tried to pass them to the students who were already setting the exams.

With sticks in their hands, they threatened supervisors and creating much chaos in the process. What ensued next was a clash with the supervisors and the breaking of glass of some windows.

The reaction of the officials at the Ministry of Education was somewhat confusing. As stated by the General Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Dr Izzat Jaradat, the English Language exam was cancelled.

Dr Jaradat, who also heads the Higher Examination Committee (HEC), assured the other students who did not take part in the events, that their rights will be upheld.

He pointed out that the others who were involved were taken by police and are still being interrogated.

Minister of Education Dr Munther Al Masri stressed that the perpetrators will be severely punished. Witnesses in the examinations' halls confirmed later that the Ministry and the HEC are taking much tougher measures in these halls—through cooperation with the police—to make sure that students who only carry the registration cards are allowed to enter the halls. The Minister assured that the students are continuing their exams quietly and without any problems.

However, later reports suggested that Al Masri denied the cancellation of the English exam in the Balqa halls as some daily published earlier.



Anxious about the exams

Al Masri said that the Ministry is still studying alternatives, and the cancellation is only one option.

He stressed that the Ministry will take into consideration the rights of the students who did not take part in the riots. Sources pointed out that those students will be given another chance to sit for the English exam. However, Al Masri said it is premature to confirm such a possibility for the time being. The final decision has not been made yet as further investigations are still going on.

The Ministry of Education is now trying to play down what happened in Balqa. Ministry officials are now actively involved in a PR exercise. Whenever and wherever they can, they are saying that what is important now is the psychological welfare of the Tawjihi students.

During a special meeting with the heads of the exams' halls throughout the country,

Al Masri pointed out they should now leave what happened behind them and act in a rational, objective manner for the duration of the exams.

While the talk over last week focused on what happened in Balqa, there were reports of other incidents in Tafila and Ma'an.

Students said that the English exam papers of Mohammed Abdel Aziz Al Khawaldeh, have disappeared, after the clamor that erupted after some students asked for a time extension in the Al Qadisiyah Secondary School, 29 kilometers south Tafila. However, teachers would not give in. Police were called to the scene but things had calmed down by then.

With about two weeks left to go for the rest of the Tawjihi exams, educational officials are keeping their fingers crossed and praying for a less stormy ride.



Doing his best

Netanyahu's zigzag policy thwarts peacemaking

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ers—Israelis who think Netanyahu has made too many concessions to the Palestinians and those who think he is moving too slowly in peacemaking.

Much of the dissatisfaction does not have to do with the peace process but with Netanyahu's inexperience and perceived weaknesses as a leader.

Many Israelis do not fault him for opening the Old City tunnel door, for example, but with failing to understand this would enrage Palestinians and for leaving for Europe after giving the order. Israelis also say Netanyahu—widely known here by his nickname, "Bibi"—has failed to assert his power over religious and extreme-right coalition members and that his grasshopper policy is determined by competing pressure groups in his camp.

"It could be, as (former Science Minister) Benny Begin said when he resigned, that for this prime minister, a tactic is getting through the noon news. And a broad strategy is getting through the weekend news," said Alpher of the American Jewish Committee.

A majority of Israelis say they feel more secure today than they did a year ago, pollsters report, because there has been only one major terrorist

attack since the Likud Party leader assumed power—the suicide bombing in Tel Aviv's Apropo Cafe in March that killed three Israeli women.

Reuven Shamai, 27, the owner of an ice cream parlor, observed: "We suffered enough at the hands of the left government. Bibi advances Israeli interests, unlike (Shimon) Peres and (Yitzhak) Rabin, who advanced Arab interests."

But many Israelis fear that Netanyahu's hard line is leading the country to war. Hanoch Smith reported that the number of Israelis who believe war is likely has doubled in the last year from 20 percent to 40 percent. A Gallup Poll published in the daily Maariv newspaper last month showed that 56 percent of Israelis felt there was "a greater chance for war" in Netanyahu's term.

There have been no negotiations between Israel and Syria since then-Prime Minister Peres called what he believed would be a temporary halt to them in March 1996.

Peres and Rabin, his predecessor, had indicated they would trade part or all of the captured Golan Heights for a peace agreement with Syria. Netanyahu rules that out. Netanyahu says he will negotiate "without preconditions,"

but Syrian President Hafez Assad says that without the Golan, there is nothing to negotiate.

Netanyahu retains the air of supreme confidence that helped to elect him. Netanyahu's view of the stalled and suspended peace negotiations is that the Arab world is adjusting to a new Israeli government that demands reciprocity instead of "give and give." In that sense, this has been a year for lowering false Arab expectations.

Netanyahu draws a parallel between the expansion of Israel's 140 or so settlements on occupied West Bank lands and Palestinian construction in their own towns and villages that few others would accept.

Netanyahu's settlement policy has been at the root of his strained relations with President Clinton, one of Israel's staunchest supporters in recent times. The United States long has opposed Israeli settlement-building in the West Bank. Still, Netanyahu stood beside Clinton in their first meeting in Washington in July. He then embarrassed the president by vowing to expand settlements.

With the East Jerusalem building, Netanyahu forced America to twice exercise its veto at the UN Security Council against condemnations of Israel, drawing harsh criticism

from the Arab world.

Netanyahu insisted that US-Israeli relations remain strong because of shared values and common interests, saying: "There can be differences of opinion. That happens in the best of families."

The Clinton administration has decided to back away from stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks for now, letting the two sides "stew in their own juices" and allowing the Egyptians to try to restart talks.

Netanyahu, meanwhile, has formulated an opening position for final-status negotiations, and says Israelis will coalesce around his views in ways they never would have for the Israeli left. His plan calls for Israel to hold on to Jerusalem and surrounding settlement blocs and the Jordan Valley. The Israelis also would hold security zones between Israel and Palestinian "self-rule enclaves." But there would not be a full-fledged Palestinian state.

But the problem with this proposal, critics say, is that while it may appeal to Israelis, Palestinians dismiss it. And it is the Palestinians with whom Netanyahu must make peace.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Police arrests Syrian man behind triple murder

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JD 91,000. He added that he had to sell his 14 million Syrian liras house for 9 million Syrian liras to cover his debts and decided to get even with the victim's father.

Jilasi said he arrived in Jordan in March of this year with his wife and took residence in Um Utheina district in Amman. He added that 12 days ago he met with the victim, who owns a lighting fixtures factory, and decided to kill him and kidnap his son and ask the boy's grandfather for a ransom.

The murderer told the police that he monitored the victim's movement and once he knew where he lived he bought a bottle of fruit juice and put sedative tablets in it. He then went to the victim's apartment and pretended to be paying them a social visit. He said that the wife and her son drank the

juice while her husband did not. When the wife went to the bedroom to sleep, Jilasi asked the victim to make some coffee, but the husband asked Jilasi to make it himself. In the kitchen, Jilasi took a kitchen knife and then surprised the husband and stabbed him a number of times until he was sure of his death.

He told investigators that he then moved to the bedroom where the wife was sleeping. He tied her feet and hands with an adhesive tape and when she woke up and began screaming he put a tape on her mouth and stabbed her a number of times. He then undressed her to give the impression that she was a rape victim.

He then set fire to a bed cover with the aim of destroying evidence and carried the sleeping child and left the apartment. He told investigators that

he got rid of the apartment's key and the murder weapon.

He also confessed that he strangled the boy who was making a snoring noise as he carried him from the apartment. He later put the child in a plastic bag and disposed of the body in a farm in Madam belonging to his father-in-law.

The bodies of the victims were discovered by Civil Defence fire fighters who were tipped by neighbors that a fire was raging in the victims' apartment. They found the body of the husband in the reception room. Initial coroner report indicated that he had deep incisions and cuts around his neck, in his abdomen and chest. His wife's body was found in the bedroom, her hands and feet tied together and her mouth gagged. The body was burnt beyond recognition, but had also suffered cuts with a blunt object.

Actors say new artists law may drop curtain on their careers

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passport, is obviously bitter. "The new law is not the holy Koran, it is still under discussion. They must take into consideration those who served the profession for tens of years," he told The Star.

Now as the countdown begins for filling up membership applications, actors are launching a campaign against the "unjust" provisions in the new law.

Currently, the estimated 730 members of the former two federations are still technically passing through a transitional period, which might take between six to nine months. The elected council of the Artists Federation resigned since Parliament ratified the new law, and now an assigned temporary council is running the affairs of Jordanian artists until elections for the new association council are held.

"The law is clear and will be implemented as it is, particularly regarding the membership," said Anwar Al Zu'bi, who was assigned together with other three officials by the Ministry of Culture to oversee the transitional period and to call for the general assembly to meet.

According to Al Zu'bi, before the general assembly meets members they must submit their applications, and those who do not comply with the membership conditions will be excluded.

"After implementing the law, if there are any needed amendments the [coming] elected council will recommend such amendments," he maintained.

In some Arab countries, like Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon, the artists associations in these countries accepted the membership of the other Arab citizens on condition of reciprocity. However, the law of the Jordanian Artists Association does not include the reciprocity clause, but limits membership to Jordanian citizens.

"The law in its final shape is a racist one," said actress Shafiq Al Tiall, who complies with the law's membership requirement. "This is so

because it limits membership to those who have the national number and excludes those who have spent their entire professional lives in Jordan serving the Jordanian art movement."

Al Tiall added that such a law is unique in the Arab world since other Arab countries accept members regardless of their citizenships.

Prominent Jordanian actress Nadira Omran holds a five-year Jordanian passport, but has no national number because she has the "yellow card" which is given to citizens of the West Bank. She believes that the new law which does not include the reciprocity condition "will oust many Jordanian actors and actresses and directors, who are residents in Arab countries and members of their association."

"In addition to myself," Omran said, "many other actors will be out of the Jordanian artists' community, because we don't have the national number or the full citizenship, although we have served the country and satisfied the duties of citizenship."

"What will be the fate of actors like Mahmoud Abu Ghareeb, my fate and the fate of more the 25 prominent actors who really shouldered the Jordanian drama for past tens years till now," Mrs Omran asked.

She said that the issue is not about the rights of Jordanian artists of Palestinian roots, but that there is an Arab dimension as well. She said the new law will isolate Jordanian artists from their Arab medium.

Legal sources confirmed that the law will need time before it could be changed or amended. However, Mrs Omran said that "if it is difficult to change the law, then the government should give us citizenships because we are worried about our future as actors."

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A Pakistani Products Expo in Amman
A PAKISTANI Products Exhibition is opening today, Thursday 19 June at the Lubna Center on the Jordan University Road from 10 am till 10 pm daily. The expo, which is being held under the patronage of the Pakistani Ambassador to Jordan, Ali Sarwar Nagavi, continues till 27 June. The expo is organized with Al Abbas Carpets.

Save up to 90 percent on long-distance calls out of Jordan: Net2Phone cuts your phone bill
THE ANSWER to expensive long-distance calls has arrived in Jordan, through Net2Phone which allows callers to contact any telephone number, anywhere in the world, through a computer.
What the caller basically needs is a personal computer (PC) equipped with sound features (sound blaster card and speakers). Once a call is initiated through a PC, it is transmitted over the Internet to the "Net2Phone Central Switch" which instantly and automatically relays the call to the destination.
The result is a full duplex voice communication between two parties. This advanced means of telecommunications eliminates the need for PC-to-PC communications provided by regular "Internet Phones".
Net2Phone incorporates the same, huge cost savings of up to 90 percent, but it offers the ability to call someone using a regular telephone unit.
Examples on the rates that Net2Phone offers include 23 cents (\$ 0.23) per minute to the United States, 27 cents per minute to the United Kingdom and 66 cents to Hong Kong.

The Star <http://www.arabia.com/star>
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Online

Legal little guys relish

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but this is also about workers' rights, social issues and the environment. We are defending our right to hold these views," said Morris, now 43 and a single parent who lives on welfare.

More than 100 witnesses, ranging from senior McDonald's executives to activists and current and disgruntled former workers, testified under scrutiny from McDonald's high-starch legal team and Morris and Steel in sweaters and jeans.

"We weren't sure that we were up to it but we decided to represent ourselves after we realized there was no legal aid or representation available to us in a libel case," Morris said.

Under Draconian British libel law, the burden of proof is on the defense and not on the plaintiff, as in the United States.

McDonald's does not comment on published reports that its legal fees may top \$10 million, but British newspapers have estimated that the company's lead attorney was paid a trial fee of \$3,000 per day. Legal types Steel and Morris, after devoting four years full time to a defense supported only by voluntary contributions, have a combined annual income of around \$12,000.

"Just because they have massive resources they cannot intimidate people to silence," said Steel.

For both campaigners, it is politics that underpins the activism. "We are anarchists in the good sense of the word. We believe in do-it-yourself politics. We believe in people having control of their lives and communities rather than having things decided for them by governments and multinational corporations," Steel said.

Judge Rodger Bell heard the case without a jury and has been weighing the evidence since eight days of closing arguments ended 13 December. If he finds for the plaintiffs this week, McDonald's also will win a court order against further distribution of the leaflet. McDonald's Love says the company does not seek damages that would bankrupt Morris and Steel and will not ask for costs.

But a finding against the McLibel Two would stand as a powerful object lesson to anti-McCrusaders everywhere.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar

Bye Bye Abd Rabbo

■ Abd Rabbo (Slave of His God), the satirical weekly magazine, won't enlighten us any more with its mirth and sarcastic humor. Its final edition, after only 10 months, was signed, sealed and delivered last week. Its chief editor Yusef Gheishan said that the weekly wouldn't be able to operate within the confines of the new Press and Publications Law. He added that because of the satirical style of the newspaper, every one of its articles would be subject to the dictat of the law and that means heavy penalties ranging between JD 15,000 and JD 15,000. Many have been mourning the death of *Abd Rabbo* that is being seen the first casualty of the new press law. While there are some who are glad to see the back of *Abd Rabbo*, top politicians, journalists, intellectuals have been expressing their deep sorrow. Tojan Faisal, Tareq Masarwah, and Fakhr Qawar said it was an end of an era. In a eulogy in *Al Rai*, Qawar said "Abd Rabbo made me smile, quite simply, I became addicted to it." He said that he will miss the newspaper very much.

A diplomatic tiff

■ This time it is diplomats. Staff of the Jordanian Embassy in Tel Aviv are facing constant harassment from Israeli security forces. The latest incident occurred last week when a Jordanian diplomat crossed into Jordan. At one of the exit points he was detained and questioned for a longer period than it is appropriate for diplomats. Jordan's Ambassador in Tel Aviv, Omar Al Rifai, confirmed the incident and said that the Israeli action goes against the Geneva Convention that deals with accredited members of foreign embassies. He said we did not expect such an action from a state that has relations with us.

Islamists undecided

■ It seems that the Islamists are still undecided whether to run for the coming elections or not. There are now three views within the Islamic movement according to *Al Majd*. The Shura Council which held a meeting last week to put an end to the debate of whether to run or not to run was itself the victim of a three way split. The first group led by Hammam Said, Mohammad Abu Faris, Saud Abu Mahfouz and Ahmad Al Kofhi said the Islamic Action Front (IAF) could not possibly run in the light of the new press law and the onslaught on political parties and professional associations. However such a view was rejected by the Overseer of the Muslim Brotherhood, Abdel Majeed Thuneibat, Mohammad Abd Al Rahman and General Secretary of the Islamic Action Front, Dr Isahq Al Farhan who even threatened to resign if the council ruled against running for the elections. The most interesting trend is the third. Although a small group, it argued for a token participation in the election. However, this was voted down by the council which said that it defeated the whole object of the exercise.

Press law

■ For the second time running the extraordinary session of the general assembly of the Jordan Press Association failed to meet to discuss the new Press and Publications Law. Only seven journalists out of the 154 that are eligible to attend turned up. Observers believe that the failure to meet reflects the prevailing mood that the law is here to stay, plus the fact that the four association leaders who submitted their resignation two weeks ago, a protest have since rescinded. There are of course those who have come to believe that the new law is still better than the amendments which the JPA presented to the government.

Dakamseh referred to psychiatrist, trial continues this week, more surprises expected

AMMAN (Star)—Monday's court session, the seventh since the trial of Corp. Ahmad Al Dakamseh began, ended with a decision to refer the defendant for psychiatric examination after a prosecution witness testified that Dakamseh may be suffering from some disorders. The court also decided to hold daily sessions as of next Saturday and approved a defence request to allow the defendant to testify in his own defence. Minutes before the end of Monday's session the military court decided to send Dakamseh, who is charged of killing seven Israelis while on military duty in Baqoura last March, for a psychiatrist evaluation.

Presiding Judge Brig. Gen. Ma'moun Al Khasawneh ordered the transfer of the defendant to undergo examination by military psychiatrists to determine whether the defendant "suffers from personality disorders or not."

Psychiatrist Major Nabil Hmoud of the King Hussein Medical Center, who examined Dakamseh two days after the 13 March incident, was standing as a witness for the prosecution. During his testimony he said that in his opinion the suspect is "mentally healthy."

However, during a cross-examination of the witness by the military prosecutor, the testimony became confusing. Maj. Al Hmoud said "Based on his past medical record, Dakamseh's medical reports



indicated that he showed signs of personal disorders and I recommend that he be examined by other psychiatrists."

The witness added that the medical record of Dakamseh stated that he was under psychological stress that led him to hysterical conditions, and he was under treatment for "disturbed personality" as far back as 1991 and that he had taken medications in the past.

Maj. Hmoud, who has been practicing psychiatry since 1988, said that during his examination of Dakamseh he showed symptoms of "introversion and had strong sexual impulses and acute temperament, and these are genetic traits with which a person is born."

The witness said that the defendant told him following the shooting incident, that for

at least eight days before the incident he was worried and couldn't sleep because he was thinking of attacking Israeli buses. Dakamseh was infuriated by the psychiatrist's testimony and shouted "He is a liar."

Maj. Hmoud continued his testimony, saying Dakamseh informed him that he shot the girls because they provoked him and were laughing at him while he was praying.

The witness, who was cross-examined by the defense, the prosecution and the court panel for one hour and 30 minutes, said he learned that the defendant had swallowed tablets in 1989 following a fight with his mother and was then taken to hospital, but medical records did not show that it was a suicide attempt. According to Maj. Hmoud the reason behind swallowing the tablets was a reflection of the defendant's anger, which is a symptom of personal disorder.

Another witness for the prosecutor, Brig. Gen. Farah Nimri, who also examined the defendant two weeks after the shooting incident, said "Dakamseh appeared normal and was in a good physical and psychological condition."

The two prosecution witnesses confirmed that Dakamseh was not subjected to any psychological or physical torture, and that the defendant signed willingly a report that he was not subjected to any form of torture.

If convicted of killing and injuring the Israeli schoolgirls

on 13 March in Baqoura, Dakamseh could face the death penalty.

Upon entering the courtroom on Monday, several women from his family, who were banned from attending the last two court sessions, rose to their feet and started clapping their hands and ululating.

At the end of the court session, Military Prosecutor Lt. Col. Muhammad Hjjazi presented the court with the case file, the defendant's own confession and other evidence related to the shooting incident.

He also dropped an earlier request to invite three Israeli doctors to testify to avoid repeating testimonies since they had already participated in writing the medical report with the other doctors who has testified last week. The Military Prosecutor also asked the court to exclude another Israeli witness, the driver of the bus.

Presiding Judge Brig. Gen. Ma'moun Al Khasawneh decided to postpone the case until Saturday to hear Dakamseh's testimony and to hear defense witnesses. The court will hold daily sessions as of Saturday. The court's verdict is expected later this month.

The defendant's lawyer, Mr. Hussein Mjalli, told the judges about Dakamseh's wish to testify in his own defence. "I appeal for him to be heard."

On Sunday, four Israeli witnesses for the prosecution testified before the tribunal. All four were injured in the March 13 shooting. ■

People & Politics

Editorial & Analysis

PR offensive

■ The diplomatic offensive being launched currently by His Majesty King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan in Europe and the United States is as important as it is timely. The King's recent visits to France and Switzerland, and the UK, heading a Jordanian business delegation, underline the special role that the King plays in promoting Jordan and defending its interests at a time when these appear to be threatened by the current stalemate in the Middle East process.



Europe, as an important partner for the countries of the region, has always stood by Jordan and supported its efforts to carry out economic reforms and development projects. This is why the King's tour of some of these countries should again bring into focus the need to redefine that support and upgrade its format to include private sector investments in this country.

The King's visit to Europe does not only serve to present Jordan's strong case as an investment destination, especially as the country undergoes important economic reforms, but also offers the King the opportunity to brief European leaders about regional issues including various aspects of the peace process and the situation in Iraq. It is hoped that Europe, as a political and economic entity, would be able to play a role in keeping the specter of war and division away from this region.

By the same token, the visit by Prince Hassan to Turkey and the United States, and his important meetings in the US capital with key US decision makers should help bring Jordan's special needs and requirements to the attention of policy makers, decision makers and business leaders. But in addition to underlining the bilateral relations, in the context of US commitment to stand by Jordan, the Prince's visit presented an opportunity to deliver Jordan's point of view with regard to political issues as well, from the latest Congress vote to move the US embassy to Jerusalem, to the Turkish military operation in Iraq, to the refugees problem and to the need to create a new concept for comprehensive security in the region.

It is hoped that with such high profile PR campaign in Europe and the United States, private capital will be moving into Jordan, which is doing a lot to put the country back on the road to economic recovery. Jordanians have taken many risks for the cause of peace and today Jordan remains an oasis of stability and rationality in a region that is still denied the reward of comprehensive and just peace.

While as Jordanians we applaud the efforts of the leadership in presenting Jordan's cause to the world, we hope that the world in return will move forward to safeguard Jordan's role and mission in this volatile region.

Partnership agreement: Tomato paste impasse

■ Jordan's partnership agreement with the EU, which was initiated only few months ago, has been sent back by the Council of Europe for further amendments. European representatives rejected the initial draft over a clause in the agreement that had to do with tomato paste exports. European and Jordanian bureaucrats will head again to the negotiating table to look into these technical details. But even if the agreement is accepted by the Council, it will have to be ratified by each member state of the EU before it finally goes into effect. So for Jordan, the benefits of the partnership are still long way ahead.



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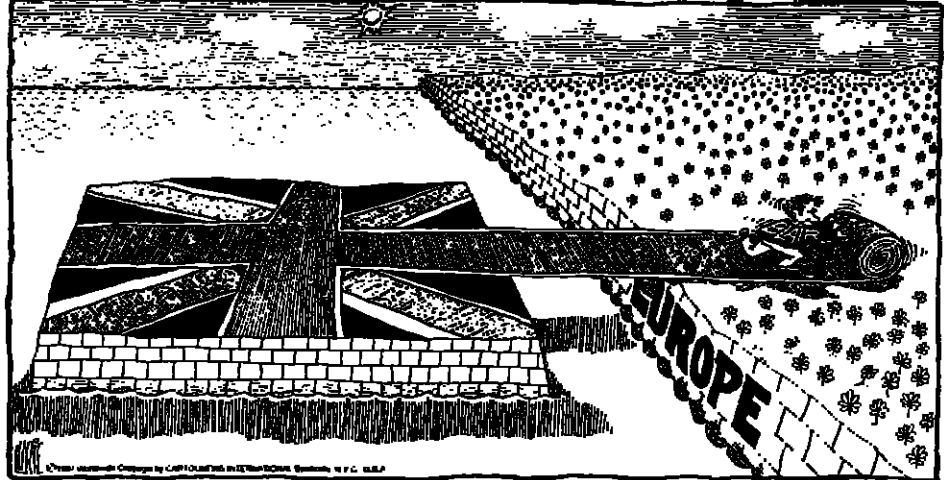
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Red Carpet Treatment

Our Say...

Congress vote: Travesty to justice

THE RECENT US Congress vote to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is the last thing that the fledgling Middle East peace process, and the estranged interlocutors in that process, needed. While the Congress position on Jerusalem and bias in favor of the Jewish state are well-known, the timing of this latest vote could not have come at a worse time.

On the one hand, and regardless of how the Clinton administration will react to the decision, the vote gives beleaguered Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his radical policies a much needed moral boost. The vote, coming from the most powerful body of legislators in the world, underlines the blind and unequivocal support of the US Congress of Israel and its policies—regardless of international laws, bilateral treaties and agreements, legal commitments and obligations.

The implications of this additional political dividend for the Israeli premier are clear. He can count on the unwavering support of US legislators for his government's policies even when he may be in disagreement with the White House over those policies. No other country in the world—and indeed no other leader, not even President Clinton himself—can pride itself in having this exclusive and unconditional backing from the US Congress.

On the other hand, the vote sends an unmistakable signal to the rest of the parties to the Middle East peace process. Regardless of the legality, or lack of it, of Israel's policies in the Occupied Territories, the Israeli government can choose at any given moment to renege on its obligations and commitments negotiated, under US sponsorship, in the framework of the Middle East process—and get away with it.

The message here is that US impartiality as a mediator is as false as the declared goals of the peace process. And this is the sad reality that we find ourselves facing today. The traditional points of reference, before the launching of the peace treaty, in the form of UN resolutions and international laws, have all but dissipated. Now even the agreements signed in flashy ceremonies between Israel and the Palestinians are in danger of being engulfed by the ensuing wave of land expropriations, annexation of cities and political and economic strangulation of the Palestinian people.

The more serious outcome of this patriarchal relationship between the US Congress and Israel is that double standards have become the norm in international relations, where a country like Israel can renege on its commitments and turn its back to international resolutions without suffering the consequences. All this is happening when we as Arabs have to submit to honoring one of the most brutal sanctions regimes ever designed which is being implemented selectively against Iraq under the guise of international law.

Against this backdrop the Arabs must realize that they are fighting a losing battle. Superior fire power coupled with superior friends dictate policies, not laws and resolutions. It is indeed a travesty to justice and to the hopes of millions in this part of the world that the usurpation of Palestine and other Arab land is being condoned by a country that sits high on the mantle of justice and liberty for all.

Letters to the Editor

Compating piracy in Brazil

To The Editor,

As a regular reader of *The Star*, an experience which I enjoyed since assuming my duties as the Brazilian Ambassador to Jordan, I read the article "Pirates run rings around the authorities—Brazil responds with a shrug," by Jaurez Mazzone, in the May 1977 issue of the World Paper. I would like to bring to your attention the following measures taken in a recent meeting—end of May—by the Brazilian "National Commission on Ports Public Security." It shows the Government is taking action to prevent and combat unlawful acts in Brazilian waters:

- To encourage sea captains attacked in Brazilian waters to report such acts to the police. As in most cases, some captains, because of the time schedule, leave Brazilian ports without reporting the incident. For insurance purposes, they report to the police at a later stage. This makes it difficult for the law enforcement agencies to act.
- To expand to other Brazilian ports the successful experience of the "State Commissions of Public Security in Ports, Terminals and Naviga-

ble Waterways—CESPORTOS System." It is already enforced in Rio de Janeiro and Santos (Sao Paulo). In 1995, 11 illicit acts were reported. It dropped to eight after those Commissions started work, and in 1997, only two were registered.

■ The CESPORTOS is expected to be implemented in the states of Bahia (Salvador and Aratu), Parana (Paraguassu) and Amazonas (Manaus), sometime this year.

■ Coordination is being taken between the CESPORTO of Rio de Janeiro and Niteroi to extend protection to vessels in the Guanabara bay.

■ Federal Police and Law enforcement offices are being installed in all ports.

Adopting such measures to combat piracy and illicit acts in Brazilian waters show the deep concern of the government. It can be dealt with effectively by reporting the incidents to the concerned authorities.

Fernando S. Alves,
Brazilian Ambassador to Jordan

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Democratizing the Middle East

Challenges and opportunities

By Ziad K. Abdelnour

WHY HAVE the Middle East and North Africa been so inhospitable to democratic change, when much of the rest of the world seems convulsed by liberal revolutions? Many observers attribute the region's reluctance to democratize to its culture and traditions, particularly Islam. Yet the repeated demands for human rights, political liberalization and democratic government in the Arab world in the 1980s and 1990s—demands which actually yielded contested parliamentary elections in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Yemen—believe uniform hostility to democracy.

Clearly, a substantial number of Arab Muslims supports the adoption of democratic procedures and institutions. The resistance of most of the governments in the Middle East and North Africa to democratization is striking, however, and if a common Arab and Islamic culture cannot account for the divergent attitudes of governments and their citizens, the reluctance of these governments in the face of the support of much of the citizenry for more liberal or democratic politics must be derived elsewhere.

The argument advanced here suggests that the explanation may be found in the political economy of the region. The nature of the insertion of these states into the international political economy provides a powerful explanation of the strength of authoritarian governments and the frailty of their democratic opponents.

Many factors have contributed to the making of the political regimes of the developing world. They are partly reflections of local cultural predispositions, partly remnants of imperial impositions and partly the results of deliberate choices by domestic and international policymakers.

For most of the developing world, and particularly for the Middle East and North Africa, non-market related transactions have been very important not only in the domestic economies but also internationally.

The states of the Arab world reflect the interests and policies of the great powers of the 20th century—Great Britain and France before the Second World War and the United States and the Soviet Union thereafter. European imperialism came relatively late to the Middle East and North Africa and was characterized by a preoccupation with the geostrategic—as opposed to economic—value of the region.

To ensure low-cost access to the region and to guarantee their global strategic interests, the European powers first attempted to identify and support compliant local political authorities in protectorates of varying degrees of formality. When the regional political system collapsed with the demise of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, the European powers reconfigured the political and economic landscape of the region, inventing new states and imposing European-style administrations, thereby creating a regional system that would secure European political interests with relatively little investment of imperial resources.

Because of the priority given to geostrategic concerns, neither the imperial powers nor their Cold War successors were motivated to invest in the region. With the exception of oil, private foreign investment was low in the 20th century. Industrialization was discouraged, and by many indicators, the Arab world lagged behind other developing states. By the final quarter of the century, the region's reliance on the industrialized countries was virtually unrequited, and the region was conspicuously absent

from the growing integration of the world economy.

In the late 1980s, the Middle East was a minor trading partner of the industrial powers (US, Europe and Japan), and if oil were factored out, export figures would fade into insignificance. Indeed, in 1989 and in 1990, just before the Gulf War, foreign investment in Malaysia alone approached that for the entire Middle East, just over \$2 billion a year.

As a result, and particularly in conjunction with the continued frailty of the domestic tax bases and the absence of multiple links with the world market, politically motivated external financing constituted an unusually large and important element in the budgets of the governments of the Arab world. Not only had the inter-war mandate system favored political over economic interests in the relations of local governments with their international patrons but, during the Cold War, political criteria were routinely accorded primacy by the superpowers who competed for allies with aid, credit and concessionary trade policies.

Because of the exceptional importance of non-market related, concessional or politically motivated external financing in the Middle East after the Second World War, the regimes of the region came to participate in the international system in much the same way as managers of state-owned enterprises operate in command or socialist economies.

During much of the Cold War, the Middle East was a crucial arena of superpower competition. Like the European powers a century earlier, the US and the USSR sought to limit each other's influence in the region while expanding their own. Like their predecessors, they worked through local client regimes. As a result, many governments availed themselves of the diplomatic game of nonalignment and national-security brinkmanship to parlay the superpowers' desire for influence.

Of course, war has its costs, and in the Arab world it has been high. Military spending in the Middle East since the World War II has been higher than in any other region in the world. By the mid-1980s, the Middle East was receiving half of all arms deliveries to the Third World; the regional average spent on the military in Middle Eastern countries was between 13 and 15 percent of GNP, almost twice the rate of the next highest region, the Warsaw Pact countries.

Even after its defeat in the Gulf War, Iraq deployed 50 percent more battle tanks than Great Britain. Although the absolute cost of defense spending has been exceptionally high and the associated cost in human lives has been staggering—perhaps one million people died in the eight-year Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s—it is not clear that the opportunity cost of these expenditures has been as high as it might be supposed.

In this context, the sharp distinction between security and development implied in the traditional counterpoising of guns or butter is probably mistaken. In Syria for example, the Military Housing Establishment was the largest firm in the country by 1984, employing half of the 150,000 Syrian construction workers in building the international airport, hotels, sports complexes, schools and housing throughout the country.

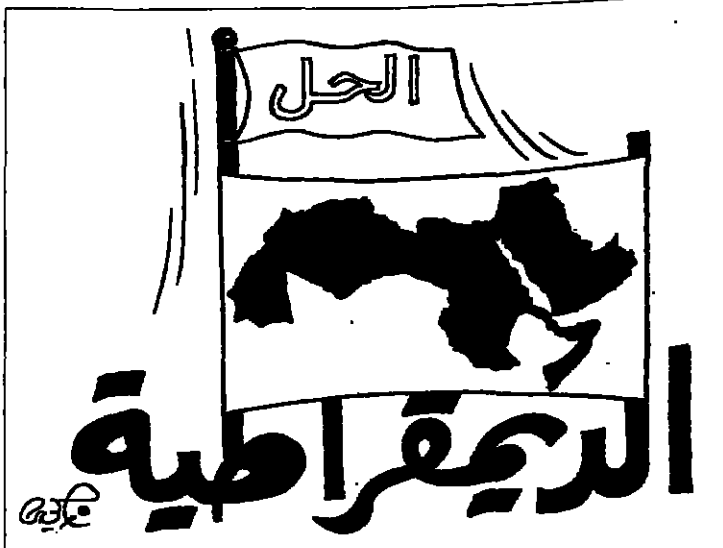
In Iraq, the Military Industries Commission, not only produced war materials but also oversaw the construction of bridges, roads and port facilities and sold 70 of its factories in 1988 to concentrate on "high-technology and export-oriented industries." In Egypt, the military National Service Projects Organization moved into agricultural development and land reclamation, arguing that "national security, for which the military is officially responsible, depends on food security," and soon became the country's most efficient producer of citrus, dairy and poultry products.

Finally, the region's governments learned early on not only that the potential benefits of foreign policy adventurism were high but that the constraints were soft: Failure in such apparently high-risk games was rarely fatal. From a financial perspective, war—or, military expenditure—has rarely been a dead loss in the Middle East and North Africa: spending on defense has often served as seed money, expended to attract more revenues.

If war has been used as a revenue-enhancement device, so too has peace. In 1977, for example, Sadat faced a major economic crisis as riots by tens of thousands of Egyptians prevented the regime from imposing necessary cuts in the massive food-subsidy program. Sadat correctly estimated that the better relations with the US to be won by peace with Israel would also produce badly needed financial aid. Although the economic dilemma was a serious one, Egypt may have turned to the Arab oil producers for assistance without reversing its position on relations with Israel. Yet, the Arab oil producers were demonstrably less reliable than the US—indeed, Arab aid to Egypt fell from \$1.2 billion in 1974 to \$600 million in 1976—and they imposed far more troublesome domestic conditions. The American *quid pro quo* for aid was only that Egypt come to terms with Israel, leaving Sadat a free hand at home, whereas the Arab oil producers routinely interfered in domestic politics as well as foreign policy.

And, perhaps most importantly, US aid is generous in both its financial terms and its political conditions. The Egyptian government received massive US foreign-aid increases after the signing of the Camp David peace treaty with Israel and retained a virtually completely free hand at home. As Sadat's subsequent political crackdown would demonstrate, liberal domestic policies were not necessarily a requirement for continued US aid.

That peace is seen as an effective revenue-enhancement device. On the day the donors' conference met in Washington, D.C., Jordan's Crown Prince Hassan and then Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met publicly for the first time at the



"The solution is democracy" is just one of the many cartoons in the Arab world calling for a more pluralistic system of government

White House to announce the establishment of several committees to promote economic cooperation, while US president Bill Clinton promised that the US would work with other countries to tackle Jordan's \$16 billion foreign debt.

The role of the incumbent rulers of the states of the Arab world is amplified by the premium placed on personal political bargaining by the rules of the game they play. Because they are not operating in a formal and impersonal market, decision makers are not obliged to give much credence to the formal and impersonal institutions of the bureaucratic state and democratic polity.

It seems it is the leadership of the state and not the state itself that is the proper unit of analysis for understanding Third World foreign policy. International support of the system of judicial states that came into being at the end of the World War II created circumstances in which political entrepreneurs on the periphery, particularly in the Arab world, could draw resources from international actors—the superpowers, the oil companies, the IMF and the World Bank.

The continued flow of such resources depended on the capacity of regimes to repeatedly renew their access to international subsidies; this, in turn, periodically required the invention of novel rationales for renewed support. In the context of the prolonged regional stalemate in the Middle East, initiatives towards both war and peace have served to draw renewed attention and justify discretionary support.

For many of the regimes in the Middle East and North Africa, both war and peace have served as important devices used to garner infusions of revenues from the international system and thereby to purchase continuing political control at home. Decisions to wage war and sue for peace are pursued not as reflections of national interests or projections of national power, but rather because they may permit faltering authoritarian regimes renewed access to resources from the international system necessary to shore up their domestic positions.

Because they have so far succeeded in producing such infusions of foreign revenues, both the initiation of war and the conclusion of peace in the region have proved inimical to political liberalization and democratization. Indeed, they have allowed—and sometimes required—the incumbent authoritarian rulers to resist and repress domestic political demands.

This conclusion presents genuine and important dilemmas for policy makers, faced with hopes not only for democracy but also for a stable, pacific and democratic world that is inexpensive to create and maintain. For the moment, peace and democracy appear to be mutually exclusive for the Palestinians; Arafat made himself the sole guarantor of a Palestinian-Israeli agreement precisely because the rewards would allow him to exercise virtually unlimited and discretionary power at home. No more than supporters of peace should be prepared to sacrifice hopes of democracy, however, should advocates of democracy oppose peace in the Middle East. To be effective, promoters of democracy must acknowledge and calculate the costs that each entails, and must begin to consider how and by whom those costs should be borne.

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Ziad K. Abdelnour is an international financier based in New York and the former President of the Arab Bankers Association of North America. He is now the President and CEO of the New York-based Phoenix Group Ltd.

Middle East Beat
by
Khair Jambek
US Congress and Jerusalem

THE STORY of the US Congress about the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem by the end of the century, and the recognition of the city as the capital of Israel, is certainly not new. Each time the subject came up in the past, successive US administrations dealt with the issue in a rational and logical manner.

It is curious however, of the reason behind the insistence of Congress to push this point, knowing too well that such a decision will not be acceptable by Arabs and Muslims, nor by the international community nor by Christians. Even a large segment of the Israeli population is not comfortable with the idea that seeks confrontation rather than reconciliation.

The US Congress has taken it upon itself to promote an issue, very surprisingly, that ignores the realities of the region and misconstrues the core dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict. One wonders if the honorable members of Congress are aware of the peace efforts in the region, and whether they are familiar with the shuttle diplomacy of Mr. Ross, and the efforts of president Clinton. This particular decision increases the already existing suspicion in the minds of the conspiracy theorists, embarrases the Clinton administration and attempts to compromise the status of the American role in the peace efforts in the region, as a partner in the process. Clearly, there is a lack of comprehension regarding the question of final status negotiations, if this is not the case, one can only say that there is an indifference to the issue of final status negotiations in the minds of the American legislators.

The PNA's future, and particularly that of Jerusalem, can only be decided through negotiations, and by reaching an acceptable solution by all the parties concerned. The centrality of Jerusalem in the peace negotiations, takes two different but equally important dimensions. The municipal and administrative dimension of the city is defined and decided by the negotiations between the directly involved sides—the Palestinians and Israelis. There is no relevance to other interference except in promoting goodwill, confidence, and mediation to bring together the differing points of view. However, the other important dimension, the question of the Holy Sites in the inner sanctum of the city. This is obviously an issue that concerns all the three great Abrahamic religions and their various denominations, and is not definitely, the domain and exclusive right of one party or another.

A consensus on this difficult issue, will have to include in its final analysis, the fact that there is a *de jure* recognition of a *corpus separatum* which by extension means, a solution which is outside the ancient Arab-Israeli conflict, and even beyond the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.

To concentrate on the political or rather, the municipal aspect of Jerusalem, albeit very important, is to ignore by default, the other major problem of the sanctity of Jerusalem for the three Abrahamic faiths. From this perspective, the decision of the American Congress, is a political gesture that has no relevance to the sanctity of Jerusalem, and its sole achievement is to plant more seeds of suspicion regarding the American objectives in the region, and casts doubts in the minds of the many, regarding the objective role of the US administration in the peace process.

The Clinton administration is an experienced one, and has been exerting efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East, but all its efforts are threatened by the US Congress's Trojan Horse.

Foreign Exchange

	Buy	Sell
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SFr	0.4801	0.4825
YFr	0.1227	0.1233
YFr (USD)	0.5624	0.5652
YFr (USD)	0.3667	0.3695
YFr (USD)	0.0419	0.0427

SATURDAY

Small Price Pointer	156
Total Volume	4512
Stock Volume	1947
Traded Stocks	441572

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19 JUNE 1997

B U S I N E S S

THE STAR 5

Business
scene

■ A delegation of Jordanian businessmen paid a visit to Canada to discuss possibility of carrying out joint ventures with their Canadian counterparts. It is headed by the vice chairman of the Association of Jordanian Businessmen, Thabit Al Taher. The participants include representatives from the banking sector (the Housing Bank and Jordan National Bank), Amman Financial Market and the National Electric Power Co. Issues to be discussed deal with tourism, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, foodstuffs, garments and the Dead Sea industries.

■ United Gulf Bank, Bahrain, purchased 1.4 million shares from the Jordan-Kuwait Bank, to conclude the biggest contract at JD 4.4 million. Such transaction provided the market with \$6 million.

■ Non-Jordanian investments in the Jordan-Kuwait Bank (JD 10 million) rose to 45% compared with 30% at the beginning of the year.

■ Royal Jordanian have carried 555764 passengers during the first five months of this year. This shows a growth of 9.6% compared with the same time last year. RJ also recorded an increase in freight size during the same period by 15.7% to reach 32008 tons.

Statistics released by RJ's planning department point out that the highest growth rate in passengers and freight operations was registered by India, North Africa, the Gulf and the Far East routes.

The RJ fleet concluded 27732 flying hours during the last five months, compared with 26267 flying hours in the same time last year. This summer, RJ is planning to organize additional flights to meet the increasing number of passengers arriving at Jordan this time of year, particularly from the Arabian Gulf and United States.

■ A leading environmental project is being studied to clean the Aqaba port, its coasts and water from harmful wastes. Total cost of this project is estimated at \$25 million.

Financing comes from American institutions, among them the American Trade and Development Agency which gave a grant of \$ 250,000. Boats will be imported at the port to carry wastes of water and oils coming from ships arriving at Aqaba. These will be used to clean the coasts and marine installations from wastes.

Could insurance companies be strong enough to get out of the bottleneck?

By Uham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

WITH THE presence of 25 insurance companies (two more on the way), the insurance sector in Jordan finds itself facing serious challenges of staying in the market.

According to latest figures, the collected premiums in all insurance branches were JD 86 million last year. This is slightly higher than the 1995 figures of JD 78 million.

Most insurance companies

didn't make good profits, and didn't distribute dividends. The reason being is that they retained their profits to increase their capital.

However, other companies, mostly new, are cashing on their voluntary reserve to raise their capital.

The capital of insurance companies set at JD 600,000, according to the 1996 Insurance Law was amended by the government. These amendments increase now set the limit at JD 2 million. The

object it was argued was to boost performance and encourage mergers. Companies now have till next October to abide by the law. Any company that is not strong enough has the option to merge.

Deputy General Manager of the Arab Life and Accident Insurance Co., Mr Fathi Ibrahim told *The Star* "that the existence of new companies in the market should have an objective to provide better service for insurers and high quality performance that benefit the national economy."

Mr Ibrahim is against those who only want an insurance stake at the expense of those operating in the market.

"It is true that if we have more insurance companies, then this would enhance competition and reduce monopoly."

But he points out that Jordan, as is the case with other Arab countries is moving towards a free market and this effects all sectors of the economy including insurance. "The law of the market dominates; the strong remains and there is no place for the weak."

In order to meet the requirements of the amended Insurance Law some companies are merging. But could this be a solution to those companies who are continually suffering losses?

The deputy general manager of the United Insurance

Co., Taysser Mashal, told *The Star* that the world today does not recognize small companies or entities. The former JD 600,000 required for insurance companies can no longer cope with global challenges or meet the local needs of the insurance sector.

That is why Mr Mashal is in favor of the amendments to the Insurance Law. He regards the capital increase to have positive effects. According to him this will create larger groups and sound companies that would be able to bridge confidence between the company and the client.

It will also enhance insurance rates and boost services of the insurance sector, he said.

Mr Mashal underlined that the number of insurance companies is far too large for Jordan, pointing out that there is no abiding to price for instance. Insurance rates are given by some companies mainly to "be up" on other companies, with the attitude of something is better than nothing. They do not focus on the risk being covered by the premium but on the lowest and possible margin of profit. This is certainly killing honest competition and not enhancing it, he said.

However, both men say the capital raise has its negative effect. They say it increases the burden on such a weak and narrow market.

Muslim nations
join forces

By Kelly Couturier

AS THE political crisis deepened in Turkey, leaders from eight Muslim nations came together in Istanbul to inaugurate the Developing Eight Group aimed at fostering economic co-operation.

A declaration signed by Turkey, Iran and Indonesia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Malaysia and Pakistan and Nigeria, set out the D-8 goals of co-operation in trade finance, communication, technology and overcoming poverty.

The brainchild of Mr Necmettin Erbakan, Turkey's prime minister, the D-8 is an effort to raise the voice of the Muslim world in global trade and economic platforms which are dominated by western economic groups. The D-8 declaration proclaims "deep disappointment" with the "old policies of double standards, discrimination and oppression" that continue in the post-cold war era, and states the group's work will be carried out according to the principles of peace, dialogue, co-operation, justice, equality and democracy.

Six initial D-8 projects were identified, including the establishment of an industrial and technological data bank and joint venture schemes in Islamic insurance, agriculture and aircraft industries.

With little more in common than their Muslim populations, D-8 leaders speeches in the inauguration ceremony reflected disparate and sometimes conflicting ideologies.

Former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani used the forum to criticize the recent adoption of a resolution of the US Congress concerning the transfer of the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Mr Erbakan's efforts to steer traditional western leaning Turkey towards the Muslim world since coming to power a year ago have infuriated the country's powerful military which warned that it would use force if necessary to protect Turkey's secular traditions.

Doubts about the political future of Mr Erbakan's Islamic-led coalition government clouded the inauguration. Turkey pulled out 100 tanks from northern Iraq since Friday in a partial withdrawal.

Turkish military officials acknowledged that some armored vehicles had been pulled out from northern Iraq.

The *Hurriyet* newspaper, quoting unnamed military officials, said the tanks had completed their duty and were no longer needed in Turkey's month-long offensive against Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq.

Turkey sent more than 25,000 troops into northern Iraq on 14 May to wipe out the bases which autonomy-seeking Turkish Kurdish rebels use to launch attacks on Turkey. ■

Financial Times Syndication

PNA conference wants to attract
business to the territories

AMMAN (Star)—A four-day Palestinian expatriates business conference will be held in July 21-24 under the patronage of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation of the Palestine National Authority, and institutions from the private sector.

The first two sessions include government officials, representatives of international organizations and donor countries, Palestinian businessmen and professionals (local and expatriates).

The tentative agenda includes issued such as:

Doing business in Palestine (opportunities and constraints), investment opportunities (project listings), investment laws and regulations, entry visas, resi-

dency permits, freedom of movement within the Palestinian territories and Israel.

Other items include export/import procedures and regulations, professionals needed for government posts and private sector institutions, companies, corporations etc, and other UNDP programs that seek the transfer of knowledge through expatriate nationals, workshops where participants could discuss joint ventures with foreign and local business. The conference program also includes visits to business and industrial sites, tourist attractions, and major cities. For more information, interested parties should contact the Palestinian embassy in Amman. ■

Business Chronicle

Foreign investment—light at end of tunnel?

SINCE THE early 1990s, growing foreign investors have been keen to penetrate this part of the world. Whether looking out for a quick buck or in search of genuine economic projects, one can not accurately say.

In the eighties, foreign investments flows were mainly to the oil-producing countries, namely the Arabian Gulf. However, such interest gradually faded away. This may have been attributed to the first and second Gulf wars, and the fluctuations of the international oil prices. International investments in oil productions became less, and global capital began to search for other avenues that related to light industry.

Especially after the last Gulf War and the onset of the—albeit erratic—peace process, things began to change, although more slowly than expected.

Since 1993, investors began to speak of a totally different ball game that has the promise of transforming the region. Thus, the interest was now in investments in industry, tourism, agriculture, railways, marine transport and other fields of development.

The volume of foreign investments saw a noticeable increase in Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Syria and Israel.

In Jordan, for instance foreign investments doubled over the last few years from \$54 million between 1986 to 1990 to \$112 million from 1991 to 1995.

The main sector that benefited from these investments is tourism. The number of tourists since 1993 continued to grow until it hit its record high figure of more than million in 1996, and bringing in more than \$700 million in revenues to the state coffers.

Touristic investments are expected to be as much as half a billion by the year 2000. In addition, Jordan is expected to witness a boom when Aqaba becomes a free trade zone.

Other foreign investments marked a satisfactory revival at the Amman Financial Market over the last few weeks, as more than JD 10 million were pumped in. This was due to the unprecedented flow of international investments and the foreign interest to purchase blue chips on the AFM.

So the trend seems to be moving in the right direction, just at a time when it seemed that everything is grinding to a halt. What needs to be done, and something that could be in government hands is to increase the momentum for foreign capital and pave the way for foreign investments.

Today there are two arguments in circulation: that international capital is not coming in fast enough to the country, and that unless foreign investments come in, the economy will stay static.

The other argument is increasing weight by the signs of the Arab investments to Jordan. Holds of this view say that the Arab investor should be our target. It is he that should be investing in Jordan rather than foreigners. They argue that this would lessen our dependency on outside sources. ■

Customs to be reduced by 30%

CUSTOMS FEES are to be reduced by 30 percent on all commodities except for cigarettes and alcohol as of the middle of next year according to the Minister of Planning Dr Rima Khalaf. Speaking at the Rotary Club in Amman, she said this is part of the government development plan for 1998. In addition, this agenda includes rehabilitating the insurance sector, moving forward in the privatization field, securing finance for investment projects and removing customs obstacles. This program will prepare Jordan for membership for the World Trade Organization. ■

Human development report measures deprivation and progress for countries around globe

POVERTY OF choices and opportunities is far more crippling than poverty of income, say the authors of the Human Development Report 1997. The annual report, published for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), introduces a new "Human Poverty Index," or HPI, which provides a country-by-country measure of poverty from a human development perspective. Instead of using income the traditional measure of poverty, the HPI looks at whether people in the developing world have the basic choices and opportunities to lead a long and healthy life and to enjoy a decent standard of living.

Among the 78 countries in the index, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, Chile, Singapore and Costa Rica do best; these countries have reduced their poverty to less than 10 percent of their population. At the bottom of the rankings are the seven countries where human poverty exceeds 50 percent: Niger, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Cambodia and Mozambique.

The HPI reflects three vari-

ables: shortness of lifespan (the percentage of the population in each country expected to survive to age 40); lack of basic education (the percentage of the population illiterate); and lack of access to public and private resources (measured as a composite percentage of persons lacking access to health services, safe water and reasonable nutrition). Without such basic opportunities, many life choices are closed.

Data constraints meant that critical dimensions of human poverty were excluded from the HPI survey, including lack of political freedom, inability to participate in decision-making, lack of personal security, inability to participate in the life of a community and threats to sustainability. Industrialized nations were also excluded from the HPI study, not only because of data constraints but also because different and more relevant variables would need to be used to measure deprivation in these countries.

"The measure is intended to help focus attention on the many dimensions of poverty, not income alone," says Rich-

ard Jolly, Special Adviser to the UNDP Administrator and the principal coordinator of the report.

"An estimated 1.3 billion people survive on less than \$1 a day. But there are other needs. Nearly a billion people are illiterate. Well over a billion lack access to water. Some 840 million go hungry or face food insecurity. And nearly a third of the people in the least developed countries most in Sub-Saharan Africa are not expected to survive to the age of 40."

Efforts to reduce income poverty and human poverty differ within and among countries. Egypt, for instance, has reduced income poverty to eight percent while human poverty still affects nearly 35 percent of its people. Conversely, Peru has reduced human poverty to around 12 percent but the extent of income poverty incidence is 49 percent.

The Human Development Report is perhaps best known for its "Human Development Index," or HDI, which measures the progress of nations in terms of life expectancy, educa-

tional attainment and income. Of the 175 countries included in this year's HDI, Canada, France and Norway top the rankings followed by the United States and the Netherlands. Among developing countries, Hong Kong, Cyprus and Barbados lead. The lowest ranking countries are Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Niger.

One particularly important finding of this year's report is that the HDI values of 30 countries fell from previous editions of the report. The authors point to two primary reasons for the decline: drops in life expectancy or per capita GDP. Contributing factors include HIV/AIDS, violent conflict and economies in transition. Still, seven countries moved from the index's medium to high human development category: Belarus, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Libya, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent.

The HDI is based on a perspective that judges development by the advances made by all groups in a nation from the rich to the poor. This contrasts with the "Human Poverty Index," or HPI, which judges development by the way the poor fare in each nation. Comparisons of HDI and HPI rankings for various countries reveal some sharp contrasts.

■ Zimbabwe, Bolivia and Vietnam had much more "poor" human development than Namibia, Guatemala and Morocco. In these latter countries, the HPI is more than twice as high, or poverty is more than twice as pervasive.

■ At the other end of the scale, Thailand, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica and Chile have all achieved high levels of human development but the extent of human poverty in Thailand, Colombia, Mexico and Panama is double that in Costa Rica and Chile.

Authors of the 1977 Report also compared the HPI values of countries with a purely income-based measure of poverty (a \$1-a-day poverty line). Among their findings:

■ Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Bolivia, Honduras and Peru

achieved similar levels of reduction in human poverty around 12 percent but the extent of income poverty incidence ranges widely from four percent in Sri Lanka to 49 percent in Peru.

■ Some of the top performers in reducing human poverty still have higher income poverty incidence: Costa Rica and Chile reduced human poverty to five to six percent but their income poverty incidence remains higher at 15 to 20 percent.

Other countries that have made substantial gains in reducing income poverty to less than 20 percent, like Cote d'Ivoire, Pakistan and Egypt, have farther to go in reducing human poverty, which remains at over 35 percent.

Using the new HPI to get an overall assessment of regional and global trends, the 1997 found that:

■ Human poverty affects more than a quarter of the people in developing countries.

■ Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have the highest incidence of both income and human poverty at about 40 percent.

■ Progress in reducing human poverty and income poverty does not always go together. In Latin America, for instance, human poverty has been reduced to 15 percent but income poverty is still 24 percent.

Although all the countries in the HPI were able to reduce human poverty during the past two decades, the Human Development Report 1997 identified two trends in human poverty:

■ The extent and pattern of human poverty reduction was not the same for countries of similar economic standing. Thus, while Thailand and Mexico were able to reduce the incidence of human poverty by two-thirds, Peru, starting from a similar base, reduced it by less than one-fifth only.

■ Reduction in human poverty was not linked to the level of income. Both Thailand and Mexico started with a similar level of human poverty in 1970, reduced it by two-thirds

during the past two decades and now the incidence of human poverty in these two countries is around 12 percent. But the per capita income of Thailand at \$2,400 is less than three-fifths that in Mexico.

Authors of the 1997 Report conclude that the eradication of extreme poverty in the next one or two decades is a legitimate goal. They underscore the unprecedented progress in reducing poverty and advancing human development throughout the developing world. Income poverty has fallen faster in the past 50 years than in the previous 50 decades and this has been matched by gains in literacy, health and other aspects of human development.

"This is a moment of extraordinary hope for people across the world," says Jolly. "The nations of the world must

reach out, not retreat. Pressures threaten to propel us in the wrong direction at a real moment of hope, frittering away our achievements over the past half century. A remarkable transformation has taken place in much of the developing world, but to succeed at eradicating poverty we must continue to invest in the mutually-reinforcing agendas of human and economic development."

The UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth said: "Unless we address the problems of poverty now, none of the great goals that the international community has set for peace, stability, human rights for all, preservation of the environment are achievable in a world where one half of the people find themselves shut out of opportunity and the benefits of a global society." ■

Jordan earns high marks

AMMAN—The findings of the 1997 Human Development Report, released by UNDP, point to a drop in Jordan's human development ranking from 70 last year to 84 this year. While the fall in ranking may send alarming signals, a closer look at the socio-economic indicators reveal that Jordan has held a steady ground in its human development achievements.

The HDI value of Jordan, a medium human development country, registered a minimal drop since last year from 0.741 to 0.730. Its life expectancy and literacy rates show positive growth, while the GDP per capita fell by 4.4%. Why then the big plunge in the rankings this year?

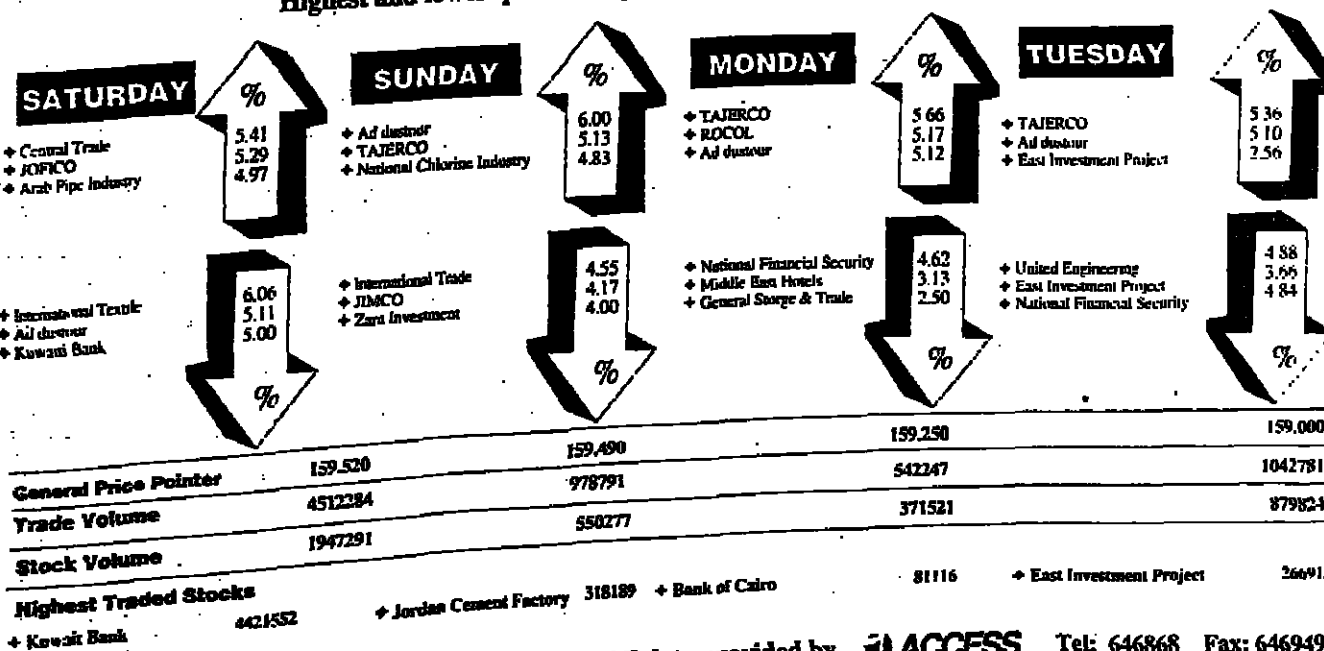
According to UNDP experts, ranking is a relative indicator that is influenced by the progress and setbacks of other countries on the list. This year, for example, with Turkey, Lebanon and Syria moving up the ranks as a result of higher HDI values, countries which maintained a relatively stable HDI value, like Jordan, were overtaken.

But there is cause to celebrate, says UNDP. The report cites Jordan as one of 10 countries which made the greatest progress in reducing under-five mortality rate, with a 80% decline between 1970 and 1995. Jordan also made it on another top 10 list of countries with a remarkable 75% decline in adult illiteracy between 1970 and 1995.

Translating economic growth into poverty eradication has earned Jordan high marks in the report as well. Statistics reveal that Jordan fared well in comparison to Namibia, for example, which has a similar GDP per capita, but four times as many poor people.

As Jordan embarks on its ambitious Social Productivity Programme to alleviate poverty and promote employment, it is expected to make even greater strides in human development achievements. Development experts anticipate that the progress will be reflected in a higher HDI value in the coming years. ■

MARKET WATCH 7-9 June



Palestinians build their state on the shifting sands of corruption

Patrick Cockburn

GAZA—It's quite literally, a house built on sand. On a bluff above the coast road overlooking the stagnant pools of Wadi Gaza stands a half-built mansion belonging to Mohammed Dahlan, the head in Gaza of Preventive Security, the largest of the 11 Palestinian security forces.

Not all is going well with construction. Mr Dahlan's four-storey house, said to have another two storeys under construction, and the new road built to its gate, are proving too heavy for the sand on which they are built. In recent months a 10ft wall of oil barrels has been built along the base of the bluff to stop the house sliding into the sea.

For many among the million Palestinians in the Gaza strip, living on average income of \$1,650 a year, the new wealth of Mr Dahlan and the leaders of the Palestinian National Authority is a sign that they alone are benefiting from the Oslo peace accords, under which they returned to rule Gaza in 1994.

In the refugee camp of Bureij, Yusuf Al Khaldi, a money-changer, was almost in tears. "I live in one-and-a-half rooms with eight children. I earn 500 shekels (\$227) a month. I am so worried because I look at our sack of flour every morning and there is not enough in it."

Corruption scandals are the talk of Gaza. Mr Dahlan, who was born in the nearby Khan Younis refugee camp, is not alone in his ostentatious expenditure. In the heart of Gaza a new house has just been completed for Abu Mazen, the chief Palestinian negotiator of Oslo, at a reputed cost of \$2 million.

Palestinian leaders protest that this is unfair. Ten years ago two-thirds of the income of Gazans came from working in Israel or the Gulf states. Now Israel has sealed off Gaza with frontier fortifications that rival the old Berlin wall. Gazans cannot get out of their tiny enclave to seek work. Last

year the local flower crop withered in the fields because the Israelis would not let it through. "You could see donkeys eating carnations in the streets", recalls Salah Abdel Shafi, an economist.

Gaza is unique in being under a permanent state of siege. More than half the population are refugees expelled from Israel in 1948. (Palestinians were forced into trucks and dumped in Gaza two years after the war). It is these who are most vulnerable to the closure. In Bureij, Nasser Al Khaldi, who owns a truck, explained: "It's getting worse. There are just eight permits issued by the Israelis for trucks from Bureij to pass into Israel. So I can work just one day a week. It isn't enough to cover insurance and maintenance."

The leadership of the Palestinian National Authority is not directly responsible for such misery, but their style of life shows extraordinary arrogance. Unlike most Gazans they have the right to travel. Umm Jihad, the wife of Abu Jihad, the Palestinian hero and lieutenant of the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, assassinated by Israel in 1988, was said to be furious at a press report that she shopped in Israel. "I don't shop in Tel Aviv", she told a friend angrily. "I shop in Paris".

The ghetto atmosphere of Gaza encourages such anxious anecdotes about VIPs with Israeli passes allowing them to come and go through the checkpoints. But there is no doubt that many members of the PNA have been quick to benefit from the fact that goods and services supplied to Gaza are not really bought and sold but have to be negotiated with Israel.

Petty corruption includes a black market in the sale of permits to work in Israel; workers pay about 4,000 shekels (\$1818) to cross out of



Jabalia camp, Gaza. Sadly, bad conditions continue to exist even under today's Palestinian National Authority

Gaza.

More important are the monopolies. Gaza consumes about 3,000 tons of cement a day, which is all supplied by one company. Mr Dahlan reputedly has interests in the gravel and freight businesses.

Most famous of the monopolies is Al Bahar (the Sea). "It specializes in 'It penetrates everywhere. Those in charge are mostly the sons and daughters of senior officials'."

If you want to advertise in Gaza, buy computer software or rent one of the new red-roofed tourist chalets on the sea front, it will be through Al Bahar.

Curiously the scandal of over corruption in PNA in Gaza and the West Bank erupted into public view over a misunderstanding. In May, Mr Arafat, apparently moved by allegations that money was being stolen, ordered the release of a 600-page report by the Palestinian Public Monitoring Department. The press gave the impression that the report claimed \$329 million had disappeared from PNA coffers. In fact the document essentially dealt with opportunities to max-

imize revenue foregone by the PA for many reasons, including the sale of land cheaply to help industry and the inability to stop smuggling into the West Bank.

Mr Arafat's lieutenants were forced to defend themselves against an allegation which had not been really made. At the same time Mr Arafat tried to suppress a tough report on economic mismanagement by a committee of the Palestinian parliament, even MPs were not allowed to have copies.

This asked what was happening to profits from the sale of cement, petroleum and tobacco, revenues from which do not enter the official budget. It noted there was no free competition for jobs and pointed to ministries "luxurious and extravagant spending".

In the past, the PA could claim some success in ending the Israeli occupation to set against its corruption and brutality. But this is true no longer. Popular anger may in the future turn in the first instance against Mr Arafat's men rather than against Israel.

The Independent

Netanyahu drafting proposal for West Bank partition

By Barton Gellman

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a vigorous critic of previous Israeli-Palestinian accords, has begun laying the groundwork for his own first proposal to settle the conflicting national claims to the West Bank.

Deliberately vague and not discussed openly yet, the proposal implies Israeli annexation of the larger part of the territory captured from Jordan in the 1967 Middle East War.

Among the lands that would pass from Israeli military rule to outright Israeli sovereignty are the principal water aquifers, columns of territory along the West Bank's borders with Israel and Jordan, and a corridor from Jerusalem to the Jordan River that would cut the West Bank in half.

The broad principles used to describe the plan suggest that Palestinians would receive three or four non-contiguous enclaves, amounting to roughly 40 percent of the territory of the West Bank, drawn to enclose nearly all of the Palestinian population.

The Palestinian entity, lacking statehood and possessing no border with Jordan, would be sandwiched between territories annexed by Israel and sliced by four east-west roadways controlled by the Israeli army.

Although Netanyahu now treats the plan publicly as something "I've offered," his government has not discussed it with Palestinians and has no present plans to do so.

Drafters of the proposal, which has been outlined to his security cabinet and a few journalists, said it is addressed primarily to Israeli domestic politics—reassuring, in the main, to right-wing rebels in Netanyahu's governing coalition and intended as a challenge to the opposition Labor Party's new leader, Ehud Barak.

The proposal's broad mooring in Israeli debate comes amid the most serious sustained crisis in Israeli-Palestinian talks since the two peoples reached mutual recognition in 1993. Palestinian leaders, who broke off negotiations when Netanyahu sent bulldozers to East Jerusalem in March to begin work on a new Jewish neighborhood, said the recent leaks are further evidence that Netanyahu means to impose unacceptable terms.

"We have heard about this plan only in the newspaper," chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said grimly in an interview Sunday. "Why bother telling us? The real negotiation is taking place within his own coalition, and with us he feels he can dictate."

For Israeli swing voters and for audiences outside Israel, especially the United States,

Israel's strategic ally, Netanyahu is calling his proposal an "accommodation with reality" after years of resisting territorial compromise.

In his 1995 book, "A Place Among the Nations," Netanyahu proposed a limited autonomy for Palestinians in "four self-managing Arab counties" that together would "take up no more than one-fifth of the land"—half of what is said to be on offer now.

Netanyahu dubbed his peace proposal "Allon Plus," suggesting an improvement on a 1968 partition plan by then-deputy prime minister Yigal Allon, who would have ceded two-thirds of the West Bank. Citing one of the Labor Party's founding heroes, wrote commentator Roni Shaked, "created an aura of Israeli consensus."

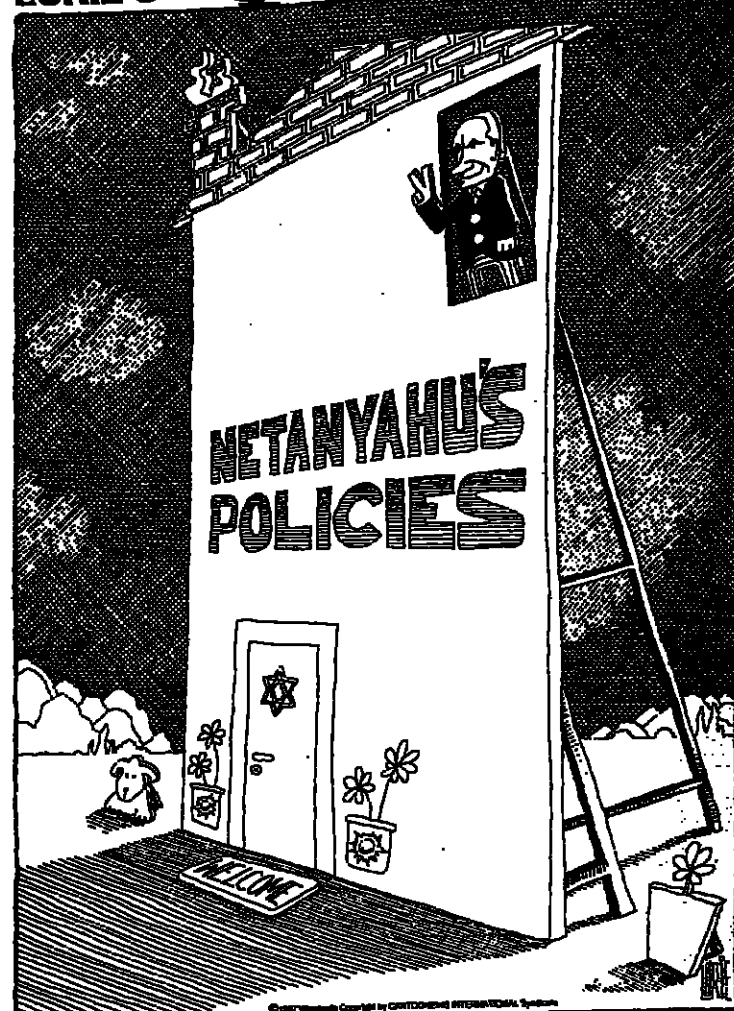
In a visit to Washington on 13 February, according to US and Israeli officials, Netanyahu briefed President Clinton at the White House on a precursor to his present plan. At Netanyahu's request, Brig. Gen. Shlomo Baron of the Israeli army's planning branch gave Clinton a detailed presentation on a classified army-drawn map of Israel's security interests in the West Bank.

Clinton, according to a US official who has read a written account of the meeting, responded with a single word, "Interesting." The US official rejected an Israeli assertion, also provided on condition of anonymity, that Clinton suggested he "understood the intentions and logic of the map."

American policymakers, insisting that the United States takes no position on the final division of land between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, were said to have expressed disapproval of Netanyahu's decision to launch a conspicuous internal debate on the plan without bringing it to his ostensible negotiating partners.

"One of the greatest Palestinian concerns is that his approach is to impose a solution, to dictate to them, and precisely at the time we're trying to get around this impression, this comes out," said one official, speaking anonymously. "Something which could be interpreted as

LURIE'S WORLD



(News Item: U.S. reports of high vacancy rates at Jewish settlements in the West Bank & Gaza Strip, challenge Israeli claims that new construction is necessary)

an opening position in the negotiation is immediately dismissed (by Palestinians) as an example of why there's no point in negotiating, when it comes out in this kind of environment."

Israeli drafters of the plan disagreed, arguing that it is essential to successful talks that both the Israeli and Palestinian publics come to understand what is possible and what is not.

"One of the problems we've faced until now was that the Palestinians defined their goals in very specific terms, a Palestinian state on all of the West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as its capital, and Israel defined its goals in abstract terms, peace alone," said Dore Gold, Netanyahu's ambassador-designate to the United Nations. "This raised the danger that peace would be on the terms of whichever party defined it most specifically. One of the things this plan does is to shift the psychology of expectations."

Even more important to Netanyahu, Gold said, is that the plan continues the premier's shift "to the center of Israeli politics." Several commentators noted that Netanyahu outlined the plan to his security cabinet the same day the Labor Party chose Barak,

a former general, to fight Netanyahu for the swing vote in the next general election.

Under interim agreements negotiated by Netanyahu's Labor predecessors with Arafat, the West Bank is now divided into three kinds of territory in a patchy map that Palestinians call "the leopard."

In six Palestinian cities and most of a seventh—three percent of the West Bank's territory and 29 percent of its Arab population—the Israeli army is gone. A little more than 24 percent of the territory, containing 67 percent of the Arab population, is a mixture of Israeli military and Palestinian civil rule. The largest part of the West Bank—a little more than 72 percent of the territory but only four percent of the Arab population—is entirely in Israel's hands.

Israel promised to hand three additional chunks of the West Bank to Palestinian self-rule before the crucial period of negotiations on the final borders and sovereignty of the aspiring Palestinian state. But Netanyahu halted those "further redeployments" as part of his current dispute with Arafat.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Ehud Barak General who assassinated Abu Jihad, crushed intifada

Ehud Barak, leader of Israeli Labor Party



THE MAIN difference between Labor and Likud in Israel has always been stylistic and rhetorical. In actuality, the two siamese-twin wings of the Israeli Zionist establishment have always pursued the same basic overall policies—and the long-line of coalition "unity" governments attests to that reality. Both Rabin and Peres served faithfully as ministers in governments headed by Likud Prime Ministers.

Hence Benjamin Netanyahu's recent announcement that his own vision of a "final settlement" with the Palestinians should be called the "Allon-plus"—referring to the Labor Foreign Minister of the 1960s who initially devised the concept of Israeli control and Palestinian "autonomy"—is no real surprise.

Yasser Arafat was quick to send Barak's personal congratulations upon learning that he had taken the helm of the Labor Party from his former pal Shimon Peres. Indeed, the only ones who might be surprised to know how similar Barak and Netanyahu think may well be Arafat and friends—for those who know them are amazed how little they know about Israel and Zionist history, and how little they understand about the agreements they have signed.

While army chief, Barak oversaw the first handovers of occupied land to Palestinians under peace deals with the PLO. He helped clinch peace with Jordan in 1994. He met his Syrian counterpart for unproductive security talks in Washington.

Barak's image contrasts sharply with that of Peres, regarded by many Israelis as too soft on security. Even Rabin's widow Leah has called Barak heir to the legacy of her late husband, who was army chief in the 1967 Six-Day War.

Barak made a name for himself in 1973 when, as a commando posing as a woman, he took part in a foray into Beirut during which three PLO leaders were killed.

Military sources said Barak devised many of the tactics used to combat the Palestinian uprising. On the eve of his leaving the army, Barak took pride in the deaths of 10 of 12 most-wanted guerrillas and vowed his forces would hunt the others down.

Foreign sources have said that in a bid to snuff out the revolt in its early days Barak planned and commanded the 1988 raid in Tunis during which PLO military commander Khalil Al Wazir, better known as Abu Jihad, was killed.

But he opposed trying to crush the revolt with unrestrained force and warned rampaging Jewish settlers against taking the law into their own hands. As a member of Labor, Barak favors swapping land for peace with both Palestinians and Syria.

While army chief, Barak oversaw the first handovers of occupied land to Palestinians under peace deals with the PLO. He helped clinch peace with Jordan in 1994. He met his Syrian counterpart for unproductive security talks in Washington.

It was opened during a special early this week. General Wadah Abu Ghannam was the guest. Trop club is membership-only club.

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AROUND TOWN

BA, Jordan given Award For Excellence

THE BRITISH Airways' team in Amman was given the Award For Excellence' award for their outstanding contribution to the region. The award was given during the British Airways' Annual Middle East and North Africa Sales Conference that was held recently in the United States.

Ms Fiona Hamilton, BA manager, Jordan said, "We are proud to receive this award which came as a result of great team work at the Jordan office." She added that "this award reflects British Airways' commitment to the Jordanian market."



Guy Ferrer Signs and traces

By Anca de Maio
Special to The Star

If it had had a title, the painting exhibition by the French artist Guy Ferrer on display at the French Cultural Center would have been named "Signs and Traces." Representative of the artist's most recent work, the 20 paintings on paper and canvas express—in a varied but coherent way—two principal ideas of his whole creation: the obsession of the trace and the aspiration to universality.

Engaged for years in a permanent quest for the truths of life, Ferrer sees art as having cognitive function. Painting, sculpture, poetry are the complementary domains of his creative investigation.

According to him, the artist is a person that has the capacity to emancipate himself from the specificity of his time. Through introspection and creation, the artist reaches far into mankind's universal subconsciousness.

Concentrating on himself, he rediscovers the great symbols common to all cultures and civilizations: the circle, the spiral, the cross, the labyrinth, the sign of the infinite, etc.

In Ferrer's opinion, it is the "trace" an artist leaves behind that will save him from anonymity and perishability. His concept of "trace" refers not only to the spiritual necessity of the artist to mark his presence in the world, but also to the primitive gesture of leaving the mark of one's hand on his surrounding environment.

The moment of creation is an act of total freedom. Any traditional instrument that might shortcircuit the passage of emotions from creator to his creation is abandoned. In stead of brushes he will spontaneously use his own palms, fingers and body.

"Codex"—a huge canvas spanning over an entire wall of the exhibition hall—is an impressive allegory of man's transit in this world on the motif of the draughtboard. Against a background of black and white squares (on which name-

less passers-by have left their foot prints), elongated silhouettes found themselves caught in the amazing swirls of an enigmatic ritual choreography.

"The characters are rather suggested than represented, they are written signs than persons," comments the artist. Their hidden elements have been lost.

The rhythm is more important than the music, and the illegibility of the signs counts more than the sense of the text.

Ferrer's characters keep asking questions, but they are not able to answer them. Their destiny is inscribed in their poems, but they cannot read it.

Eyes and hands banded, they live their solitary lives kneeling and trying to recall the words of a forgotten prayer. When they stand up, their stretched figures take the shape of a dagger or of a cross. Lost in an infinite space, they cannot communicate; even when a couple turn up, their marriage is only formal.

In general, Ferrer's paintings are simple and essential. The artist applies black ink or glue on the white surface of his favourite material—paper. "I am fascinated by its fragility and strength at the same time," he says.

Sometimes he glues powder pigments and other media (zinc, stone, golden paper, oil) all over the paper and experiments on texture effects.

Gold and black are the elements of Ferrer's most important contrast. "I work on the principle of contraries and I oppose



gold—the color of divinity, to black—the color of absence," he points out.

A specialist in surprise-making, Ferrer alternates to this effect, the technique of multiple contrasts and of meaningful details. Shocking but not provocative, the French artist means to "concern" his contemplating public.

Born in 1955 in Algeria, Guy Ferrer has lived and worked in Paris since his early twenties. A tireless traveller, the Parisian artist considers himself a citizen of the planet.

By an impressive number of solo and collective exhibitions all over the world, his international recognition has become ever more important.

Enjoy touch of music at RCC

THE NATIONAL Music Conservatory is organizing an oud and guitar recital featuring Omar Munir Bashir (oud) and Ziad Awsi (guitar). The recital is on Saturday 21 June at the Royal Cultural Center.

Bashir will open the first part of the evening with improvisations on the oud. Then Awsi takes over and performs a number of guitar pieces by well known composers. In the second part, the transcendent music of the oud and the guitar will vibrate in a dialogue as the two perform famous eastern music.

Bashir was born in 1970 to a well-known Iraqi musical family. He started studying oud at the age of six at the Music and Ballet School in Baghdad. He also spent five years studying at the Institute of Iraqi Maqam in Baghdad and the resumed his studies at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest, Hungary, specializing in musical compositions, and choral groups.

Bashir worked as head of the Al Birq music group in Baghdad and gave numerous solo performances as well as jointly with his father, in Iraq, France, Netherlands, Russia, Hungary, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Switzerland and Jordan.

Al Awsi was born in Baghdad in 1970. He studied music at the Music and Ballet School in Baghdad. He resumed his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts and received his BA in Piano. He is a member of the Iraqi Choral group and



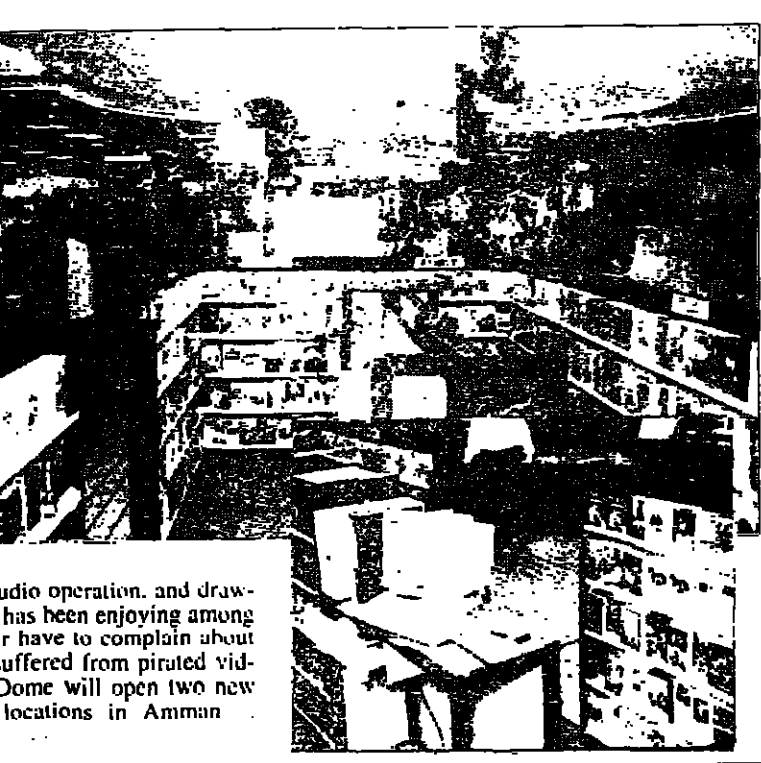
has arranged and composed a number of pieces for piano and guitar. He is currently the piano and faculty member of the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad.

The Pleasure Dome opens in Ahlia Abella

AS PART of its policy to expand the customer base of original videos, The Pleasure Dome opened its second branch at the Ahlia Abella Superstore last month.

The new outlet, like its predecessor, features a fully computerized operation to facilitate selling and rental of more than 500 original video titles—going up to nearly 800 in July.

Being the first and only entirely original video and audio operation, and drawing on the success it has been enjoying among customers who never have to complain about the lack of quality suffered from pirated videos—The Pleasure Dome will open two new outlets in other locations in Amman soon!



Tropicana, stylish restaurant at Middle East Hotel



TROPICANA is the new stylish restaurant in town. Situated in the Middle East Hotel, it offers its visitors unique service especially during the summer time.

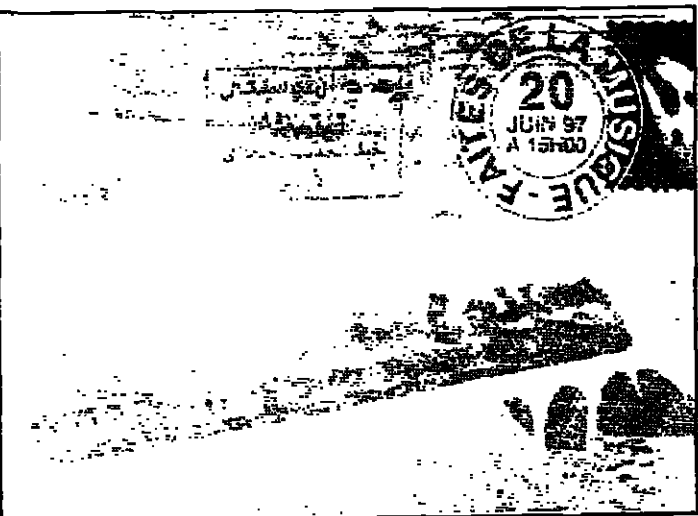
Tropicana, which is located at the pool side, has a distinctive atmosphere. Its romantic setting and soft music, coupled with its delicious cuisine, will almost certainly make it a hit with those wanting something distinctive and tropical for their palate.

It was opened during a special reception early this week. General Manager Waddah Abu Ghanam was there to receive the guests. Tropicana is a membership-only club.

All on board the music train!

CELEBRATE MUSIC Day on board the famous Hejaz steam train! This is what the French Cultural Centre and Freddy for Music are inviting you to do on Friday, 20 June (departure: 3 pm from Amman railway station (Mahatta), return: 10 pm).

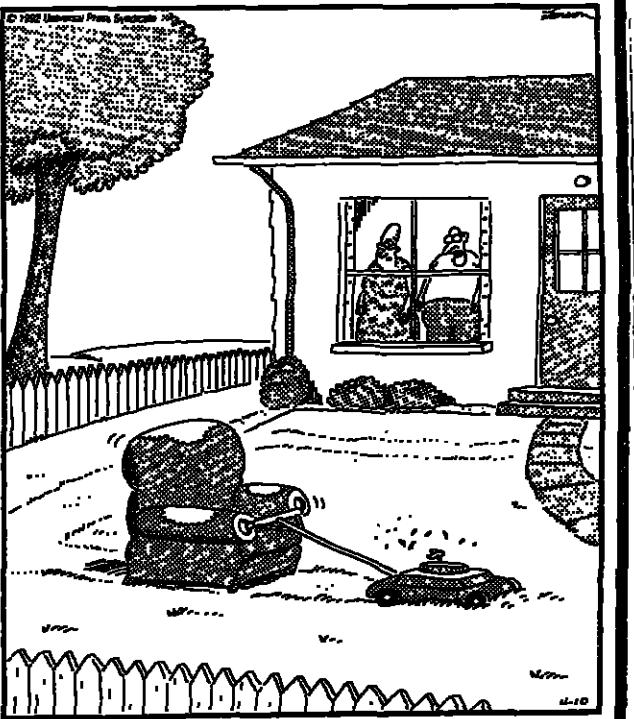
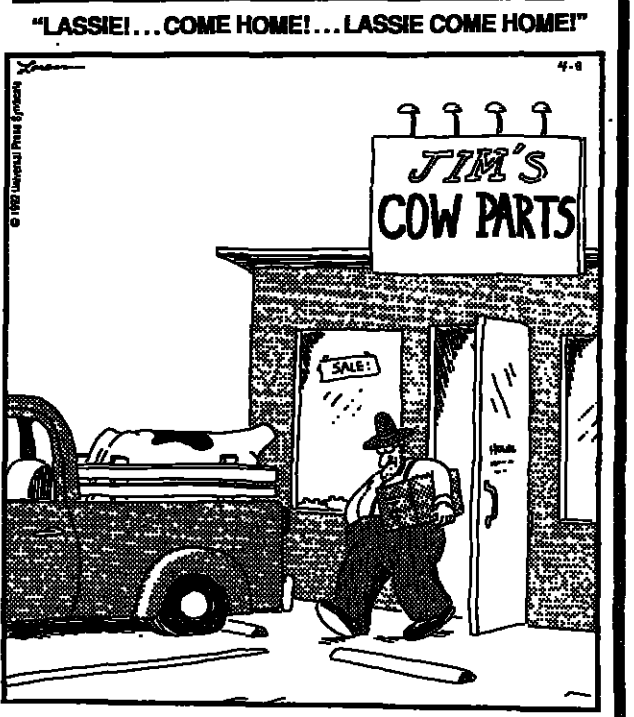
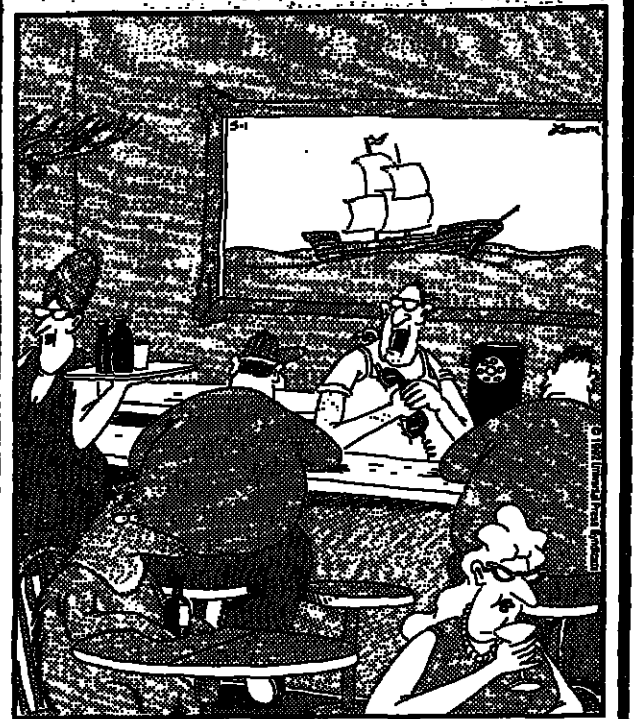
All kinds of music will be performed throughout the journey both on board by the passengers and at the different stops (Khirbet Al Samra and Mafrqa). A special venue will be held at Mafrqa. Tickets are sold now for JD 10 inclusive of trip music and snack. They are available at the French Cultural Centre Tel: 637009/639445 and Freddy for



Music Tel: 692 696. See you there and don't forget your instruments!

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



AGENDA

- Exhibitions**
 - "The Contemporary Arab Artists Exhibition" showing the works of more than 60 artists from the Arab world, continues at Darat al Funun till 24 July.
 - The artworks of the Jordanian artist Farouk Lambaz continues at Darat al Funun ends today, Thursday 19 June.
 - Artworks by nine contemporary Iraqi artists, entitled "Ecology & Environment in the Iraqi Art", at the Royal Society of Fine Arts, runs till 12 July.
 - The artworks of the French artist Guy Ferrer continues at the French Cultural Center, ends today, Thursday, 19 June.
 - Spring Exhibition of Plastic Art '97 at Greater Amman Municipality runs till 30 June.
 - The artworks of Farouk Lambaz continues at Darat al Funun till June 19.
 - Artists' book exhibition entitled "One of a Kind" continues at the American Center till 30 June.
 - Photo exhibition of Hong Kong, sponsored by the Chinese Embassy, at the Royal Cultural Center, runs till 19 June.
- Films**
 - Jeremiah Johnson at the American Center, Thursday 19 June at 5:00 pm.
 - Une histoire simple at the French Cultural Center, Monday 23 June at 8:30pm.

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Sinead O'Connor, menacée de mort à Jérusalem

La chanteuse de rock irlandaise Sinead O'Connor a annulé son concert pour la paix, à Jérusalem, après avoir reçu des menaces de mort. Ce concert prévu samedi était au programme d'une semaine culturelle sur le thème : «Partager Jérusalem, deux capitales pour deux États». Une semaine d'expositions et autres manifestations préparée par l'organisation «Jerusalem Link» qui regroupe des Israéliens et des Palestiniens. Un activiste israélien d'extrême-droite, Itamar Ben Gvir, membre du groupuscule «Front idéologique», a indiqué à la radio militaire qu'il avait participé à des «actions» pour empêcher la venue de Sinead O'Connor. «C'est en grande partie grâce à notre intervention que le concert a été annulé», a-t-il ajouté sans donner d'autres détails. Le «Front idéologique» a pris la succession du «Kach», un parti raciste anti-arabe mis hors la loi après le meurtre de 29 Palestiniens par un colon israélien à Hébron en 1994. Daphnan Golani, une des organisatrices israéliennes, s'est dit «désolée» de l'annulation du concert. Elle a dénoncé «l'atmosphère de menaces qui prévaut à Jérusalem depuis l'assassinat de Yitzhak Rabin (en novembre 1995) contre tous les artistes favorables à une coexistence pacifique entre Israéliens et Palestiniens». Selon elle, le concert de Sinead O'Connor s'annonçait comme un succès avec 2000 billets vendus en trois jours.

Le Jourdain prépare un supplément pour son édition du 10 juillet à l'occasion de la fête nationale française. Une place spéciale vous est réservée dans ces 4 pages consacrées à la présence française en Jordanie. Profitez donc de cette vitrine publicitaire pour votre entreprise. Pour tous renseignements, contactez Yannick Lainé ou Mahmoud Fares au 645 380 ou au 652 380.

SELON MOI

Il a fallu attendre une déclaration du ministre de l'Intérieur assurant que le gouvernement ne comptait pas revoir le statut des associations professionnelles pour calmer la tension qui régnait dans le pays la semaine dernière. Quelques jours auparavant, un quotidien avait en effet publié un article annonçant une révision prochaine de ce statut. Le conflit qui oppose depuis des années associations professionnelles et pouvoir exécutif avait connu un tournant avec l'annonce du processus démocratique en 1989. Depuis, le pouvoir ne cesse de rappeler à l'ordre ces associations lorsque les différends politiques deviennent trop importants.

Le statut particulier de ces associations est à l'origine de cette problématique. Pour défendre les intérêts moraux et matériels de leurs membres, ces associations jouissent d'un atout de poids : l'adhésion obligatoire. Par conséquent, ces organisations sont gigantesques, comptant des dizaines de milliers de membres, alors que quelques centaines, voire quelques milliers seulement, participent réellement à la vie de ces associations.

Le problème qui se pose de nos jours est dû au lourd héritage politique de ces organisations. Un héritage qui bloque toute tentative de réforme interne. En effet, les syndicats jordaniens, qui forment le noyau des couches moyennes dans le pays, ont joué au nom de toute la société civile un rôle décisif dans la défense des libertés démocratiques pendant trente ans, durant toute la période de la loi martiale. Le conflit israélo-arabe, le soutien à la cause palestinienne et les questions pan-arabes faisaient partie de leurs agendas. Un ordre du jour qui leur confère une place prépondérante dans la vie politique jordannienne.

Or, malgré l'autorisation des partis politiques à partir de 1992 et les autres acquis démocratiques, ces associations ont tendance à vouloir jouer le même rôle qu'autrefois. Pourtant, beaucoup de membres insistent aujourd'hui sur la nécessité de réformer ces associations selon des principes plus démocratiques et professionnels, et de rééquilibrer l'action politique de ces associations. Certains souhaitent en effet que le rôle professionnel prenne désormais le pas sur les activités politiques. Si elles sont légitimes, ces revendications n'ont cependant que peu de chances d'être entendues actuellement. Car pour beaucoup, ces réformes feraient trop le jeu du gouvernement qui souhaite lui aussi voir ces associations se concentrer davantage sur leur mission initiale.

Le Jourdain, on y revient. Tous les jeudis dans le Star 645 380

Code de la presse

Les journalistes laissent courir

Des organisations internationales écrivent au roi pour lui demander d'abroger la loi provisoire sur la presse et les publications. Pendant ce temps, les membres du syndicat des journalistes jordaniens montrent peu d'intérêt pour se réunir et combattre cette loi liberticide.

Vendredi dernier.

Une assemblée générale du Syndicat des journalistes jordaniens (SJJ) était prévue : sept membres sur 154 sont venus ! Un chiffre insuffisant. Le président du syndicat a dû annuler la réunion comme il l'avait fait

une semaine auparavant. La déclaration du roi Hussein, selon laquelle «il n'est pas question de revenir sur cette loi», explique en partie ce découragement. D'autre part, les présidents des cinq associations professionnelles sont revenus cette semaine sur leurs démis-

sions, décidées pourtant il y a un mois pour protester contre le nouveau code de la presse. Du coup, beaucoup de journalistes ont estimé qu'une réunion n'était plus nécessaire et que, de toute façon, elle ne servirait pas à grand-chose. En réalité, le syndicat des

journalistes ne s'est pas montré très actif pour défendre les droits et les intérêts de ses membres et encore moins la liberté d'expression. Le SJJ, par exemple, n'a rien fait pour soutenir Fahd Rimawi, le rédacteur en chef de l'hebdomadaire al-Majid (tendance nationaliste), victime d'une agression physique et morale dans un centre de sécurité. Si on remonte aux années 80, le syndicat n'a jamais réussi à percevoir, sur les recettes publicitaires des journaux, les 1%, pourtant prévus par les statuts de l'association professionnelle des journalistes.

Trois issues possibles

Pronuée en 1981 sous les auspices d'Adnan Abou Odeh, ministre de l'Information très porté sur les questions de sécurité, cette loi a servi de filtre pour mieux introduire dans le SJJ des journalistes proches du pouvoir.

Tout d'abord, patrons des quotidiens et simples journalistes cohabitent dans le même syndicat. Ensuite ne peut exercer le métier de journaliste que celui qui obtient la carte du SJJ. Et pour cela il faut passer deux ans en «formation». C'est ainsi que des journalistes jordaniens qui dirigeaient des publications dans les pays du Golfe (en particulier le Koweït), ont dû faire leurs deux ans de

«formation» à leur retour au pays en 1991. Simplement pour être reconnus en tant que journalistes et obtenir la carte du syndicat. Bref, le syndicat des journalistes jordaniens a été conçu dès le départ pour être docile aux décisions gouvernementales.

Les journalistes des hebdomas et ceux qui sont venus de l'étranger ces dernières années ont apporté du sang neuf mais pas de quoi changer les orientations et le fonctionnement du syndicat. Pour l'instant, les éditeurs-majors des hebdomas sont très préoccupés ces jours-ci par leur avenir. Ils se concentrent pour s'adapter à la nouvelle loi qui entrera en vigueur le 15 août prochain. «Par principe, nous nous opposons à cette loi et nous espérons que la chambre des députés la refusera au moment venu. Mais d'ici là, nous devons en tenir compte et nous préparer à l'échéance du mois d'août», affirment-ils.

Les rédacteurs en chef envisagent trois issues possibles : la fusion de certains hebdomas afin de collecter la somme nécessaire pour être autorisés à publier, la parution à partir de l'étranger ou la disparition pure et simple, comme l'a choisi Abed Rabbo.

Abed Rabbo, première victime du nouveau code

L'hebdomadaire satirique a publié samedi son dernier numéro. Les administrateurs du journal ont décidé de fermer pour ne pas risquer de payer les trop lourdes amendes imposées par la nouvelle loi sur la presse et les publications. Sur la couverture, le titre : «Son sang sera sur vos mains à jamais» évoque la masquée d'Abed Rabbo, poignardée dans le cou.

En bas, on peut lire : «Les félicitations sont à adresser au siège du Premier ministre. Combien de publications suivront : Abed Rabbo ? Les hebdomas Tarik al-Moustakbal, Chihan et Sawt al-Mara pensent pouvoir remplir «sans problèmes» les conditions exigées par la nouvelle loi. De leur côté, al-Majid, al-Bilad et encore Sawt al-Mara ont demandé au président de l'Ordre des avocats de porter plainte auprès de la Cour Suprême contre la loi provisoire.



Education

Les écoles se mettent au DELF

Pour la première fois cette année, le Diplôme Élémentaire de Langue Française (DELF) a été proposé dans plusieurs écoles privées jordaniennes. Ce diplôme reconnu en France offre à beaucoup de jeunes une chance supplémentaire de faire des études dans l'hexagone.

Ils sont étudiants et tous

passionnés de langue et de civilisation françaises. Cette semaine, ils se sont retrouvés au Centre culturel français et de coopération linguistique d'Amman (CCCL) pour passer la deuxième partie du DELF, un diplôme reconnu par le Ministère français de l'Éducation. Composé de six unités indépendantes, qui se regroupent en deux parties, le DELF permet une bonne évaluation des compétences en français (expression, compréhension, grammaire, civilisation). Avec un examen réussi, une unité est acquise à vie. Les examens ratés peuvent être repassés dans n'importe quel centre culturel français dans le monde et à n'importe quel moment.

Plus de 900 élèves

Correspondant à un niveau de langue intermédiaire, le premier degré du DELF (quatre unités) a été étendu à certains établissements scolaires privés jordaniens. Il remplace à partir de cette année les attestations de langue (certificat et brevet), sans valeur réelle, qui étaient délivrées par les services de l'Ambassade de France.

Plus de 900 élèves ont passé la première partie des épreuves du DELF qui ont mobilisé plus de 80 professeurs jordaniens et 20 pour les épreuves écrites et 20 pour les épreuves orales. Le DELF implique une grosse organisation, c'est pourquoi il n'a été introduit que dans trois ou quatre pays seulement.

leur participation et l'ampleur

de l'événement demandera une organisation encore plus rigoureuse», anticipe Grégory Delatre, professeur de français au Centre culturel et organisateur des deux sessions DELF de cette année.

Près de 85% des élèves ont réussi les examens. Les quatre meilleurs ont été récompensés par un séjour en France. Beaucoup plus motivés, le premier degré du diplôme en poche, ils ont tenté cette semaine d'obtenir l'intégralité du diplôme au Centre culturel français.

Etudier en France

Dans la perspective d'éventuelles études en France, ils espèrent aussi obtenir le Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française (DALF), un document officiel qui leur donne libre accès à toutes les universités françaises.

Hadeel Osous, 17 ans, du Collège Rosaire-Shmeisani, veut faire des études de médecine ou de pharmacie. Avec l'intégrité du DELF, elle espère pouvoir trouver un emploi intéressant dans une entreprise pharmaceutique franco-jordannienne.

Dania Sweidan n'a que 16 ans mais semble déjà très déterminée. Elle a suivi le cours intensif proposé d'une manière facultative par le CCCL aux candidats du deuxième degré du DELF et a l'intention de se présenter aux examens du DALF. «J'aimerais étudier la médecine dans une université française, mais pour cela je dois obtenir une bourse, sans laquelle ce sera difficile», con-



Grâce au DALF, les étudiants jordaniens ont la possibilité d'aller étudier dans une université française.

state-elle avec beaucoup de lucidité. Allisar Nafa vient du même collège et vise également le DALF avec l'espoir de poursuivre plus tard des études en France ou même d'enseigner le français en Jordanie.

«Ces élèves représentent une catégorie de public que le Centre ne touchait pas vraiment auparavant», explique Grégory Delatre. «Le DELF est très valorisant pour ces adolescents qui ont vu de plus en plus à la bibliothèque et aux cours de préparation. L'introduction de ce diplôme dans les écoles stimule l'apprentissage du français et en même temps, dynamise la vie du Centre culturel».

Anca de Malo

Processus de paix

Vers l'Intifada?

Les affrontements de l'autre côté du Jourdain se multiplient. Et la reprise des négociations s'éloigne encore un peu plus.

Le risque de

guerre n'a jamais été aussi proche qu'aujourd'hui depuis le début du processus de paix israélo-arabe (Madrid 1991) ou israélo-palestinien (Oslo 1993). Ce pessimisme ne vient pas seulement des Palestiniens qui voient les chars et les forces israéliennes se rapprocher de leurs enclaves et se préparer pour occuper à nouveau les villes palestiniennes libérées. Les Israéliens eux aussi sont de plus en plus inquiets. Selon Oren Shahour, l'ancien chef d'Etat-major de l'armée israélienne, la politique de Netanyahou a provoqué la disparition de la confiance palestinienne et donc l'arrêt du processus de paix. «Si cette situation perdure, je m'attends aux vents de la guerre et je crois que nous aurons à faire à une violente Intifada armée», prévient-il. Et ce qui se passe depuis quelques jours à Hébron avec les affrontements répétés entre les forces israéliennes et les citoyens palestiniens pourrait en être le prélude.

Nabil Shaat, ministre pales-

tinien du Plan et de la Coopération internationale, estime qu'Israël mène une campagne militaire sur l'ensemble des territoires palestiniens et menace ainsi ce qui reste du processus de paix. Il n'a pas caché son amertume face aux Etats-Unis qui «pourrait convaincre du danger de la colonisation en Cisjordanie ne font rien pour l'arrêter». Le ministre palestinien s'en est pris aussi à la décision du Congrès américain de transférer l'ambassade des Etats-Unis de Tel-Aviv à Jérusalem. Il l'a qualifiée d'injuste, dangereuse et injustifiable puisqu'elle est contraire à la légalité internationale.

Pour sortir de l'impasse, Nabil Shaat n'exclut aucune possibilité mais il précise que l'autorité palestinienne condamne toute action militaire contre les civils israéliens. En attendant, le ministre palestinien veut croire à la médiation égyptienne et à une éventuelle action des Européens.

De Gaza, Hassan Balawi



Un soldat israélien interpelle un jeune manifestant palestinien lundi à Hébron

Colloque

La Jordanie étudiée à Paris

Dans le cadre de la saison jordanienne qui se déroule actuellement en France, un colloque s'intéressant à l'histoire contemporaine du royaume hachémite s'ouvrira mardi à l'Institut du monde arabe.

En marge des manifestations

culturelles prévues dans le cadre de la saison jordanienne, une présentation politique de la Jordanie aura lieu cette semaine à Paris au cours d'un colloque scientifique organisé par le Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur le Moyen-Orient Contemporain (Cermoc). Depuis plusieurs années, Riccardo Bocco, secrétaire scientifique du Cermoc à Amman, réfléchissait au moyen de réaliser un ouvrage complet sur l'histoire contemporaine de la Jordanie. Or, celui-ci verra le jour quelques mois après le colloque «Politique et Etat en Jordanie/1946-1996» qui aura lieu mardi et mercredi à l'Institut du monde arabe. Cet ouvrage rassemblera à la fois les travaux de nombreux chercheurs et les actes de ce colloque parisien.

Un colloque qui sera inauguré

mardi par Adnan Bakhtit, président de l'université jordanienne Al Bayt, Camille Cabana, président de l'Institut du monde arabe et Riccardo Bocco.

«Quand vous regardez la production en sciences sociales sur la Jordanie, vous remarquez qu'elle est assez limitée. On ne dispose pas d'un ouvrage collectif permettant de faire le point sur le pays dans différents domaines», explique Riccardo Bocco. Un tel ouvrage existe déjà pour l'histoire plus ancienne de la Jordanie, s'intitule «Village, steppe and state. The social origins of modern Jordan. 1850-1950». Co-auteur de ce premier livre, Tareq Tell, participe aujourd'hui aux côtés de Riccardo Bocco à la réalisation du second ouvrage.

L'organisation de la saison jordanienne a donc offert au Cermoc la possibilité d'achever ce projet. Car comme l'explique Riccardo Bocco, «dans la production en sciences sociales sur le Proche-Orient, la Jordanie est un peu un Etat délaissé car jugé artificiel. Or, la stabilité de ce pays est unique dans la région».

Créé voilà bientôt dix ans, le centre jordanien du Cermoc s'intéresse géographiquement à la Jordanie et à la Palestine. Le centre de Beyrouth couvre, lui, le Liban, la Syrie et l'Irak. Depuis un an, le Cermoc d'Amman publie un bulletin semestriel, *Jordanies*, rassemblant les travaux de différents chercheurs sur la Jordanie et une chronologie précise. Dans le cadre de son programme de recherches sur la Jordanie, il travaille à la réédition en français d'un ouvrage datant du début du siècle écrit par le père dominicain Jausen, et prépare sa publication en arabe. Enfin, quatre chercheurs s'intéressent actuellement à la ville d'Irbid où ils étudient l'influence de l'urbanisation comme vecteur de nouvelles formes d'intégration.

Par ailleurs, le Cermoc a lancé en décembre dernier un important projet de recherches sur l'UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in Near East) avec 10 chercheurs, 5 Européens et 5 Arabes. Un projet en deux ans qui devrait déboucher sur l'organisation d'un important colloque en 1999 pour les cinquante ans de l'UNRWA.

Olivier Bras

C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

Cinéma

Cycle consacré au réalisateur Claude Sautet. Le 23 juin à 20h30 au CCCL, Une histoire simple (1978).

Exposition

Fin aujourd'hui de l'exposition consacrée au CCCL à l'artiste Guy Ferrer (sculptures et tableaux).

Faites de la musique

Pour la traditionnelle fête de la musique qui a lieu chaque année en France, le CCCL vous propose d'embarquer à bord du train du Hedjaz le vendredi 20 juin.

Partant de la gare de Mahata (Amman) à 15h00, ce train fera des escales musicales à Khirbet Assamra et Ma-fraq. De 15h00 à 22h00, des groupes de musique se produiront lors du voyage et des arrêts.

Les billets sont vendus au prix de 10 JD (voyage+concerts+plateau+repas) au CCCL ou chez Freddy for music.

1120

the star's weekend magazine

Dafoe relishes villainous role in Megafilm 'Speed 2'

By Frank Rizzo

NEW YORK—Willem Dafoe has played both sides of the moralistic coin.

He's portrayed such good guys as Jesus in Martin Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ" and the ethical soldier in Oliver Stone's "Platoon" (for which the actor received an Oscar nomination). He's also played such lowlifes as the smarmy Bobby Peru in David Lynch's "Wild at Heart" and the cop killer in William Friedkin's "To Live and Die in L.A."

He's back on the bad side with "Speed 2: Cruise Control," which opens this week. The film is a sequel to the 1994 blockbuster that made a star out of Sandra Bullock (She's back, but Keanu Reeves is not; Jason Patric plays the romantic hero).

Dafoe plays a computer mastermind who seeks revenge on his former employer by commandeering a luxury cruise ship. The character also has an odd habit: placing leeches on his chest for therapy. "I think it's one of the cooler things in the movies," says Dafoe during a recent interview in the offices of 20th Century Fox in Manhattan.

For the 41-year-old actor, it's his first involvement with a summer megafilm. Though "The English Patient," in which he last appeared, won the top Oscar this year, it was a movie that was a constant struggle to get made.

But "Speed" is different.

"You just know that it's a big deal," Dafoe says. "The support crew is amazing. It's like being part of an army, and like an army, you have this single purpose. It just takes over and has a life of its own, and you just hold on to your hat."

One of the reasons Dafoe took the role is that he wanted to play a nasty, though sometimes playful, villain. (Think Dennis Hopper meets Bill Gates.)

Another reason is that Dafoe wanted to be associated with a blockbuster.

"It's not that people don't want to see me in films, but I don't have a name that puts (butts) in seats," he says.

He says he feels he's missed out on roles because he is perceived as an eccentric actor in dark little films, kind of the boy-next-door type—if you lived next door to a mausoleum.

"I'm a little piggy," he says. "I see opportunities sometimes that I like to have that aren't available to



Dafoe

me, so careerwise, I do get envious."

And as far as playing the romantic hero in major films, Dafoe's name rarely makes it to the top of the list.

"Casting people feel that they have to get someone who looks a certain way, and I think that jury is still out whether people find me attractive or not," he says. "If some studio executive's wife finds you attractive, that's one thing. But if she says, 'Oh, that creepy-looking guy,' that role isn't going to be offered to you."

Born and raised in Appleton, Wisconsin, USA, (home of Joe McCarthy, Harry Houdini and CNN's Greta Van Susteren), Dafoe came to New York in 1977 and saw a production by the avant-garde Wooster Group off-Broadway. He joined the company and also began his long-time relationship with the company's leader, Elizabeth LeCompte. (They have a 15-year-old son, Jack.)

Dafoe regularly returns to the

Wooster Group between movie roles. He just finished starring in the company's production of Eugene O'Neill's "The Hair Ape."

Does it bother him that the muffin budget for "Speed 2" could cover the production costs for a Wooster Group show?

"Of course," he says, "but that's just envy. You really can't compare the two."

He keeps returning to that company, he says, for artistic exploration.

What did he learn from "The Hair Ape" experience?

"A lot of philosophical stuff," he says. "It became a meditation on that sense of belonging, of identity, of alienation and how important all of that is."

And what did he learn from "Speed 2"?

"That I love the beach." ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

The English Patient

Egypt's celebrated, hungarian brothers

By Samir Raafat

Star Cairo Correspondent

LASZLO ALMASY (1895-1951): pilot, explorer, soldier, spy.

"Laszlo was the least charismatic of the two Almasi brothers," recalls former jet-setter and Egyptian polo champion, Victor-Mansour Semeika. "Janos was the convivial bon vivant always surrounded by beautiful women. Laszlo was an introvert with a bit of an inferiority complex but the one with the most diverse life experience. His rise to fame started when he caught the attention of Egypt's great desert explorer Prince Hussein Kamal al-Din. It was I who introduced him to the prince."

Semeika, 90+, remembers Laszlo Almasi well for both men were privileged friends of Prince Youssef Kamal, a cousin of Prince Kamal al-Din. A descendant of Viceroy Mohammed Ali who ruled Egypt the first half of the 19th century, Prince Youssef was world famous for his horsemanship, his Rockies-to-Himalayas hunting expeditions, his love for the arts and more importantly, for his generosity.

An engineer with the Hungarian auto firm Steyr, Ladislav "Laszlo" E. Almasi (pronounced Alma-jee) appeared on the Cairo scene during the interwar period. Yet, according to Semeika, no one remembered Almasi for his industrial exploits. Instead he is remembered as an explorer, a self-proclaimed geographer and a daredevil pilot, elements no doubt which made The English Patient the success it is. One thing the multilingual Laszlo was not, says Semeika who hasn't seen the movie. A dashing Casanova.

Laszlo Almasi and his brother Janos lived in Castle Bernstein (ex-Borostyankó), a medieval fort-like abode situated on a dominating hill in Austria's parochial Burgenland which borders Hungary. Whereas in Europe Janos was the debonair host and socialite, it was Laszlo who became the more recognized in Cairo and thereabouts.

In those days, European aristocracy along with several Egyptian princes hunted pheasants and gibber in the large estates bordering the woods of Hungary. Prince Youssef Kamal was an amateur. The middleman for these grand affairs, recounts Semeika, was Janos Almasi. "It was through him that the Egyptian prince and his select entourage arranged for the best hunting lodges money could buy. The term used then was 'acheter une chasse.' Semeika, then a regular guest at Janos Almasi's Budapest home, recalls how the walls of the main hall were decorated with the heads of 40 African water buffaloes.

According to the magazine Hungarian Observer (1997), Laszlo Almasi did more or less the same thing in reverse: organizing African safaris for the Austro-Hungarian aristocracy. One of these was for Count Duke Antal Esterhazy in 1926 and another the following year for Count Sigmund Szechenyi. Both were acquaintances of Prince Youssef Kamal whose own hunting expeditions had taken him to Kenya with Janos Almasi and Victor Semeika as his personal guests.

After Steyr, Laszlo Almasi worked for the British-run Egyptian Desert Survey Department. In his spare time he was either tinkering with or piloting a de Havilland Gypsy Moth over Egypt's uncharted territories. Perhaps Laszlo being his father's son, Gyorgy Almasi, one of the most famous travelers, zoologist and ethnographic explorers to have graced Central Asia, his heritage may explain the son's dogged determination to travel the outcaches of Egypt's outback starting with the Western (Libyan) desert.

This was the same desert where Prince Kamal al-Din was leading a costly overland expedition in 1932-36 for the discovery of the lost oasis of Zarzur. The prince had spent considerable amounts equipping his desert armada with especially built Citroen caterpillars but still no sight of Zarzur. Air survey was necessary and Laszlo was just the man to do it.

Crossing the vast Western Desert in his Gypsy Moth, Almasi discovered al-Gilf al-Kebir,



Fiennes

a granite massif as large as Switzerland, once the habitat of prehistoric humans long before the African Sahara had dried up. Other discoveries—although some were disputed—attributed to Almasi were Wadi Sura or Picture Valley with its fantastic cave drawings and later, Gabal Oweinat. By then the nomads of the area had nicknamed him Abou Ramla or father of the dunes. The airborne nomad was a legend of the deserts.

Through his discoveries Almasi became a prominent member of the Royal Egyptian Geographical Society where many of his finds and theories were discussed including his book "Die Sahara," printed in the 1930s by F.A. Brockhaus. The patronage of King Fouad no doubt opened many doors for the adventurous Magyar. Years later, Fouad's son, King Farouk would consider Almasi for the position of director of the Desert Institute but the latter's precipitated death would prevent any such appointment.

It was during one of his treks into Egypt's Nubian outback near Wadi Halfa that Laszlo Almasi pitched his hypothesis that Magyar prisoners were brought to Nubia, in the south of Egypt, by the Ottomans in the 16th century to act as border patrols. (Turkey occupied Hungary from 1529 to 1687). But as five hundred years separate us from that period, the browsing of their descendants ostensibly took place which is why there are no striking physical characteristics discernible today that would otherwise confirm Almasi's theory.

Before being portrayed as an explorer, soldier, lover, spy, in Michael Ondaatje's novel The English Patient (First Vintage International Publication, December 1993) Almasi had been immortalized in several fictions (fiction-action) works including Ken Follet's Key to Rebecca where he was portrayed as a Libyan desert explorer in the service of the German Wehrmacht.

When the Second World War broke out, Laszlo Almasi, a veteran pilot from the First World War,

joined the pro-German Hungarian air force. In view of his background and language skills he was seconded to the service of Lieutenant General Waldemar Kenese who in turn passed him on to Rommel's Afrika Korps where he was promoted to flight lieutenant teaching the German flyers rescue, first aid, and survival tactics in desert warfare.

Semeika does not believe Almasi had any strong ties with the Nazis. "If he had any affiliations with the Nazis it was never more than a casual matter which may have had its origins when his brother Janos and Adolf Hitler were being simultaneously courted by the Righty British aristocrat, Unity Midford."

As Rommel planned his African campaign, Laszlo Almasi's expedition of the Libyan Desert was in high demand. One of his wartime missions took place in May 1942 when he planted a German agent in Egypt via a grueling overland route which spanned the entire Western Desert ending a few kilometers from Assiut in Upper Egypt. This is how John Eppler was smuggled into Cairo only to be caught by a vigilant wartime police a few months later in his rented houseboat next-door to the one belonging to Egypt's renowned bellydancer, spook Hekmat Fahmy.

After the war, Almasi was indicted by a Hungarian court of law for having collaborated with Rommel and for having allegedly written a wartime German propaganda book. Charges were dropped thanks to the favorable intervention of a Hungarian orientalist Gyula Gernamus.

Laszlo Almasi died in Salzburg, Austria, in March 1951 following a protracted illness. It would be four decades before he was resuscitated in his ancestral home on a Hungarian stamp commemorating the 100th anniversary of his birth.

Casanova or not, two years later it was for Ralph Fiennes in The English Patient to eternalize Almasi as an ascetic romantic.

The legend of Abou Ramla lives on. ■

BBC expands coverage with emphasis on global news

By William D. Montalbano

LONDON—From the executive suite of the broadcast giant that assertively bills itself as "the world's largest news organization," Tony Hall of the British Broadcasting Corp. is embarked on an audacious, chancy swim against a rising journalistic tide.

Arguing that a current decline in international news coverage is dangerously myopic for countries such as Britain and the United States, the 46-year-old executive director of BBC News is expanding foreign reporting and analysis and increasing his network's outlets at home and abroad.

Tally ho, America: The BBC is honing in on your car radio and television screen.

The economic and intellectual future, Hall argues, belongs to nations whose decision-makers are best informed about one another. Those who will reap the bountiful harvest of millennial change must understand the challenges—and risks—of rapid globalization that has replaced superpower confrontation as the decisive end-of-century fact of international life.

"The world is now much more complex; that is the great underlying challenge," Hall said. "The biggest threat—or opportunity—for all of us, to our living standards and our children's, is undoubtedly globalization. As far as I am concerned, it's as big a story as the Cold War."

Challenging disinterest in foreign news among viewers and readers, advertisers and corporate

managers since the end of the Cold War, Hall is extending BBC news horizons: more news bureaus, a Web site, a growing TV news channel.

Noting shrinking foreign reports and analysis in American newspapers and television, Hall will soon probe the US market. By year's end, he expects that BBC World Television, a 24-hour news and information channel already seen in 174 countries, will make its commercial American debut.

A 50-minute, internationally focused daily news show—jointly produced by the BBC, WGBH Boston and Public Radio International—debuts July 1 on 500 American public radio stations, the BBC says. To be broadcast, like the BBC's World Service, from Bush House in London, the as-yet unnamed show is intended as an early morning drive-time replacement for departing Monitor Radio's "Early Edition."

The new radio show will "focus on the global news stories of most importance to the United States," says Sam Younger, director of the BBC World Service. The venerable World Service, for so long the standby for international travelers, is already retransmitted by 180 public radio stations in the United States, including nine in Southern California, the BBC says.

Americans, like the rest of the world, also will have access to a new BBC online international news site launching on the World Wide Web in October.

Decisions made on local information are incomplete without

larger input. Think you'd like to breathe life back into Britain's shoe industry? First watch a BBC special that traced a pair of athletic shoes from a back-land factory in Asia to exponential markups later—a glossy European designer showroom.

Citing American research, Hall says there are about 250 million workers in the United States and the 15 nations of the European Union today who earn around \$85 per day. Within a generation, about 1.2 billion Third World workers will join labor markets, earning less than \$3 per day. Globalization on that scale potentially affects everybody's job and every family's pocketbook, he says.

A Liverpool native with a self-described penchant for "the big trends that shape people's lives," Hall joined the BBC out of Oxford University, reporting from tormented Northern Ireland in the early '70s before becoming a news executive.

From BBC News headquarters in west London, he now presides over 2,000 journalists in eight domestic and 42 foreign bureaus, and 12 channels of television, radio and online media. Among them, polyglot World Service Radio, the international radio news quality standard for decades, boasts an estimated audience of 143 million around the globe.

People really listen to an institution known affectionately around the world as "the Beeb." More than 2 million listeners to the World Service's Thai service

wrote last year to answer quiz questions about English soccer. And yet how many First World listeners could tell you who rules Thailand or what is Bangkok's most pressing problem?

"At a time when most of our futures are decided globally, the readership of our newspapers and the audiences of our broadcast programs appear to be less interested in the world. And journalism, in response, seems less interested, more introspective, too. This should be of major concern to anybody who is interested in good, intelligent media," Hall said in an interview.

Most First World news organizations, he notes, are spending less on foreign news, justifying it as cost-cutting. "But also because surveys show that audiences and readers aren't really interested. They say, 'It's not us, you understand—it is the folks out there!'"

The first challenge for a major news organization in these changing times, Hall says, is deciding how to engage people in "what we all believe are the crucial issues of our times."

The publicly funded BBC will spend more this year on news coverage than last, Hall says. Not because there is more to spend, but because cost savings in the news division can be reinvested in improving coverage rather than returned to the bottom line, as they might in a private corporation. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Fiction/Brian MartinBooks

Traitors and martyrs

THE UNTOUCHABLE and The House of Sleep are in the first class of contemporary British fiction. Banville's novel is inspired, intelligent, literary: Coe's reaches a summit of pertinent social satire and is simultaneously a seriously funny, and funnily serious, book.

The Untouchable is an equivalent of Shakespeare's treatment of Henry V: the protagonist is instantly recognizable but at some distance from the real historical character. In Banville's case this is Anthony Blunt, Victor Maskell is the image of Blunt: "I looked like one of those preserved bodies they dig up from Scandinavian bogs, all jaw, and sinewy throats and hooded eyeballs."

Maskell's introspective testament of his treachery presents what might have passed through Blunt's mind and possesses his total lack of remorse. Blunt's support cast is included: Burgess and Maclean enter as Boy Bannister and the "Dour Scot" McLeish. There are parts too for Victor Rothschild and Blunt's deceptively domestic MI5 interrogator, Arthur Martin.

Literary traces of diverse writers, such as Greene and Larkin, appear. Always good at the thumb-nail sketch, Banville describes T.S. Eliot, his "camel-eyed gaze and timorous voice, the marks of a lifelong, obsessive dissembler."

The Untouchable is compelling. The narrative of Burgess and Maclean's defection is particularly so in its pathos, humour, excitement. The reflective Maskell is left waiting for death, realising the truth of his Harley Street consultant's remark "I should have

thought you had died already in a way." Maskell reckons "public humiliation on the scale that I have experienced it is indeed a version of death."

Jonathan Coe's successor to the cult novel What a Carve Up! is superbly entertaining and it too has its numerous literary allusions: Pinter's plays "appeal to the misogyny deep within the male psyche." The House of Sleep is Ashdown, a huge cliff-top edifice, once a university students' residence. Twelve years later it has been bought and turned into a clinic for sleep disorders. A group of students who previously lived there, coincidentally reassembles, some as doctors, some as patients.

Sarah, a narcoleptic, cannot distinguish between dreams and reality. Terry Worth, a failed, disillusioned film critic and video addict, is insomniac. The sinister, diabolically ingenious psychiatrist who directs the institute, Gregory Duddon, was the old-time student boyfriend of Sarah.

Coe's novel is refreshingly incorrect politically. It is pitifully and justly satirical, particularly of the nation's school education system, the plight of teachers over-inspected and interfered with by quangos, and of management ethics introduced into the health service. The "role-playing" modules and creativity enhancement procedures administered by instructors with the vacantly shining eyes of the evangelical zealot at a NHS psychiatrists' conference, ring too true for comfort.

It is a clever, witty book. Coe is fascinated by film and concerned with language, "a cruel and faith-

less mistress" who is both "traitor, and a double agent." Sarah tries to understand her problem by attempting to read an earlier, obscure book of the same title by Frank Kingshe sits "looking warily at the copy of The House of Sleep which lay on her kitchen table like an unexploded bomb." Coe's House explodes in the reader's consciousness with irresistible force.

"Thank heavens for the charity of dreams" utters the narrator of Jim Crace's Quarantine. At least the abused, long-suffering wife of a dying caravan merchant in the Judean desert almost 2000 years ago gains some respite from the harsh reality of life that way. Then along comes a straggling line of five people, three men, a woman and an indeterminate fifth, "a slow, painstaking figure, made thin and watery by the rising, mirage heat."

It proves to be Jesus, the Galilean, come for his fast of 40 days and temptation in the wilderness. Unwittingly and ironically he cures the merchant and consequently there is no relief for the wife, "unwidowed, unfreed." Quarantine, a hermit's novel, is a modern parable, set in a hunched, barren biblical landscape and told in a similar sparse, arid, ascetic sub-biblical style, well worth reading especially by sceptics and mystics.

Whereas Great Apes is, without apology for the pun, self-indulgent whimsy with enough yarn to make a short story but which is teased out tediously to novel length. It would be a very resourceless person who had nothing better to do than read this book. ■

Financial Times Syndication

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